



The Ides
of MARCH

Florie Willingham Pickard



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BY

FLORIE WILLINGHAM PICKARD.

"Remember March, the ides of March remember."

"I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano,
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one."

—SHAKESPEARE.



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PREFACE.

A CLOSER union of our country, the sanctity of life in our American homes, the terribleness of sin, the sorrows resulting from war, are some of the thoughts that form the motive of this book.

It is doubtful if this book would have been written but for the encouragement which I received from my husband, William Lowndes Pickard, author of "Under the War Flags of 1861," and of many poems and literary articles. His love of the beautiful in literature has been my inspiration while writing "The Ides of March." If this book shall help some to have nobler conceptions of life, I shall be repaid for these years of incessant work.

THE AUTHOR.

THE IDES OF MARCH.

CHAPTER I.

“Remember March, the ides of March remember.”

“The baby figure of the giant mass
Of the things to come.”

—*Shakespeare.*

MOTHER-bird chirps her last notes to her fluttering nestlings, busy bees cease their daily toil, little chicks tuck their downy heads beneath soft feathery wings, old tired sun kisses the pink roses into drooping repose, and the heavy odors of jessamine, oleanders, and honey-suckles, stealing through the open casement deepens the repose of baby Myrtle, as her little head falls wearily over the arm of old “Black Mammy.” Strange no one knew anything of this little Southern bird. Did God send her in the night or day, in sunshine or in rain? Surely her mother can tell. “No, I remember nothing of the circumstances attending the birth of the child, except that she was born on the “Ides of March,” and for that reason I called her ‘Idma,’ yet her father insisted on calling her Myrtle, for some old sweetheart, I suppose. It has passed from my mind now why the name Myrtle was given her, but then, when you have eight children, you, too, will forget these minor things.

Mrs. Dean had invited a dozen or more ladies and gentlemen, the first of the land, to dine at her home. To have an invitation to Mrs. Dean’s was quite an

honor, and was talked of among the ladies for days previous. It was enough for the world to know Mrs. Dean was the wife of the wealthiest planter in the State of —. This made it certain that any reception given at the mansion would be considered the crowning event of all social occasions.

The hour for the reception was drawing nigh. Down the long avenue, made picturesque with its overlapping trees, the long gray moss swinging to and fro by the gentle breeze, and where birds were sweetly singing here and there, fitly called, "Lovers Retreat," you could see at the first bend of the road the elegant carriages coming, first one, then another, and another. Now one has stopped in front of the gate. It is Mrs. C—. The conveyance is not turned by the horses; oh no, this might jostle the grand lady; her two footmen take hold of it, and gently lift it around; thus her ladyship alights without soiling her silks on the wheels. Leaning on the arm of her husband, who is dressed in spotless linen, the fashion of the day, Mrs. C— goes up the graveled walk to the Dean mansion. A servant in livery stands at the entrance to show her the parlor; there await Mrs. Dean and her eldest daughter, Catherine, to receive the guests. If any one knew how to give a dinner, it was Mrs. Dean.

She was a typical Southern woman; no, this could not be said, for she was too cold-hearted, and shall it be added?—Mrs. Dean was an infidel. However, she was a brilliant conversationalist, dignified, ambitious and refined.

Sweet, soul-inspiring music filled the house. When this ceased intelligent conversation, spiced with wit and repartee, held genial sway. You would think Mrs. Dean was anxious about her dinner, but no, she knew nothing of what would be on the table until the costly

silver covers were removed, when she and her guests would be seated at the table. This seems marvelous in this day, but those of the South who lived in the old *régime* know it to be true. There were sixteen servants in the Dean mansion, one to cook the cake, one the meat, another the pastry. Each had his special task. Hence it is no wonder that things went like clock-work. Away, now, into the conservatory to inhale the perfume of opening buds. The soft, sweet music, the chirping of birds in the tall trees near by, and the low murmur of the fountains, all tended to make one feel as if he were in an enchanted spot. But what was that? A feeble sob of an infant catches the ear.

Well for the nurse Mrs. Dean did not hear that cry, for although she had eight children, go when you would you seldom heard a sound from them. To know how she managed thus, you must understand more of the beautiful yet cold mother. In Mrs. Dean's room, on a spotless white bed, for the mother did not believe in spoiling babies by rocking them in a cradle, lay the little babe, Myrtle Dean. A peep at the precious darling shows a tear glistening on her white, chubby cheek. And those eyes! could you once see and forget? Even through her tears they flashed fire and sweetness, hatred and love. It has been said the eyes are windows of the soul; it was only too true in this little one's case. The nose was Grecian, the mouth showed refinement. The complexion was snowy white. The small dimpled hands would have been meet for a model in art. The hair, dark and wavy, was as fine as silken skeins. She was a good-natured baby, but easily frightened. Awakening and hearing unusual sounds, she had given a faint wail. The old black mammy (bless her dear old soul) hurried to the baby's side, and as she bent over the tiny form, the little one gave

her a look, trying to find out, in her baby way, if she were friend or foe. When baby saw love in old black mammy's eyes, sweet trust came into hers; it was then the little face turned to say, she could not speak but by looks, "I love you nursy." The little chubby hands went up, the tiny feet kicked against her long, white dress, and she commenced to coo in her sweet baby voice. Dear Myrtle, even as a babe, how you loved to be loved, ready to meet all more than halfway!

Love pure and undefiled is seldom given. Hold it baby, hold it child, hold it man, hold it woman, in whatever guise it comes, hold it fast! It is thy greatest jewel. Bind it about thy neck. Guard it well; rich or poor, high or low, it comes to all some day; but how few of us can say the thief has not come and stolen our treasure in an unguarded moment; and we have wept and wailed in our despair. Love, love, sell it not for gold, for worldly honor, for ambition.

" Mightier far

Than strength of nerve or sinew, or the sway

Of magic potent over sun and star

Is love, though oft to agony distrest,

And though his favorite seat be feeble woman's breast."

CHAPTER II.

“How much the wife is dearer than the bride.”

—*Lord Lyttleton.*

A FEW months previous to Mrs. Dean's dinner party, far off in another State, sat Mrs. Waldo in a low, willow chair by a large window. In her dainty white hands, was a fine cambric needle. In her lap lay a long, white dress. Each little tuck and each little puff had been made by those same dimpled hands, through many days and nights. On a chair near by were some of the finest-textured fabrics, placed there to have the finishing lace whipped on the little neck and sleeves. All in the room was the perfection of neatness. The spotless white bed was high from the floor. The carpet had been taken up for the summer and a new matting took its place. The bright rugs were artistically placed here and there. The quaint mahogany furniture was highly polished. An old lazy cat lay asleep in the sunshine. The curiously wrought clock on the mantel ticked the hours into days. There were pieces of delicately designed fancy work on dresser, chair and table. Should you have entered the room a glance would have been sufficient to convince you it was the love retreat of some fair creature. As Mrs. Waldo bent over the dainty work she hummed the old song:

“Come rest in this bosom, my own stricken dear;
Though the herd have fled from thee, thy home is still here;
Here still is the smile that no cloud can o'ercast,
And a heart and a hand all thy own to the last,

Oh ! what was love made for, if it is not the same
Through joy and through torment, through glory and shame ?
I know not, I ask not, if guilt's in that heart,
I but know that I love thee whatever thou art.
Thou hast called me thy angel in moments of bliss,
And thy angel I'll be 'mid the horrors of this;
Through the furnace unshrinking, thy steps to pursue,
And shield thee, and save thee, or perish there too !"

The birds in the cedars near the window did not sing with more melody nor with half as much soul as Viola sang to-day. The violet-blue eyes, hid by long, drooping lashes, turned at times toward the window, thence far over the fields of ripening grain. The gentle breeze that wafted the sweet perfumes of the jessamine and magnolia blossoms played about the head of Viola Waldo, blowing the shining ringlets from the fair forehead. The song ceased; a half sigh came to the ruby, pouting lips. Viola leaned far out the casement as if to catch a glimpse of some loved object. "Oh, why don't my sweetheart come. There! getting up has made me drop my scissors and thread, I wish my dear boy were here to pick them up for me. Oh, can it be a sin to love so much? If so, I am lost, for I know my dear husband is my idol. I wonder what makes me so sad to-day? I have five children that are more than beautiful, and they are so good and sweet; my every want is supplied, a husband that for twelve years has made each month more of a honeymoon than the one previous. He has but one thought—the love and happiness of wife and children. I know I have the blues now just because I wish to see him. Well, I do not believe I can get out of a big cry." Viola went over to the low couch, with its crimson cushion, and buried her head in its soft folds. The band that bound her hair came loose, and now a shower of gold was over the

plump shoulders and white, dimpled arms, that could be easily seen through the fine sheer muslin.

"Oh, sweetheart, please come home, why do you ride on that black mare all day? Is it because you look so handsome on her? Have you not enough overseers to look after your business, without staying so long? You say you never leave me over an hour at a time, but it seems more like a year. Oh, sweetheart, if I could have only one wish realized in this world it would be to see you this moment, and have you with me alway."

"Well, my sweet Viola, already is your wish partly granted," said a deep, manly voice just back of the fair wife. The tear-stained eyes of Viola turned to meet the answering gaze of the large, black, dreamy eyes of her husband. He stood erect, six feet tall, with one hand on the door and the other brushing back the glossy, raven-black hair from his high, broad forehead. His white teeth and firm, chiseled mouth were hid by a thick black mustache. As Ulhugh Waldo stood a moment in the doorway, one of his quaint, humorous smiles made the dreamy eyes sparkle and parted his lips as if to speak love to sweet Viola.

"Well, little girl, I am waiting for some one to come and meet me. Have those dear feet gotten tired of running to meet sweetheart?"

At this moment he saw the tears in his darling's eyes; and in a second he was kneeling by the side of his beautiful wife. "Why, precious, forgive me for teasing you, I did not know these lovely eyes were wet with tears. Let me kiss them away." The husband bent low and showered kisses on the sweet, innocent, childlike face. The lips were kissed, the chin was kissed, the cheeks were kissed, the white neck was kissed and the blue eyes were kissed again and again,

but the tears would not stay back. As soon as one dewy pearl was kissed away, another, and another would come, as if they loved to be kissed.

"Why, angel, what is the matter? Tell me, love." He gently raised her from the couch in his strong arms and pressed her tenderly to his bosom. "Precious, has anything happened that you would keep from your husband? I thought my little girl told me the secret of her every heart-throb."

"And so I do, my sweetheart. Never in my life have I kept a single thought from you. Is it best thus? It has been said no woman ever told her husband everything; nor ever did man tell his wife all in his heart; but people can be mistaken."

"But, little girl, you are keeping something from me now."

"No, darling. I am not. I cannot tell you what my trouble is. I wish I could. There is something I cannot express in words, which makes me feel that a terrible time is impending; it seems we are on the eve of some great calamity. I suppose it is very silly to act as I do, but I cannot help it—what is it? My heart is about to break." And a sob shook the frame of the beautiful wife.

"Darling, I must send for a doctor, my little girl must be sick." Rap, rap, rap! Mr. Waldo put his wife gently from him and went to see who was at the door. "Marster, I jest come to han' dis note to yer." With a low bow the old man left the room and closing the door he stood outside of it, awaiting his master's orders. Opening the paper that had just been handed to him, Mr. Waldo glanced hurriedly over its contents. It was then his ruddy cheeks turned pale as death; his manly form swayed to and fro; his lips quivered and some inarticulate phrase as, wife, children, country, oh,

God! was half-audible to the wife, as she lay on the couch. Viola felt with a woman's quick intuition that now it was time for her to be brave. Knowing her husband did not lose his self-possession for trifles, she arose from where she lay, went to where he stood, and on tiptoe so as to entwine her arms lovingly about his neck, imprinted an affectionate, wifely kiss on his brow. "Ulugh, my love, what is it that troubles you?"

From his hands fell the paper, Viola saw it, picked it up and read it, and found therein our fair Southland had now need of her bravest sons. "Oh, Ulugh, were you afraid to tell me? Would I have been a wife worthy of you, if I did not encourage and help you in everything that was for your own and your country's good? No, never, never my precious husband, will I stay you in your onward course of nobleness and bravery. Dare any woman take the marriage vows if she has but her own selfish being to please? Should it not be her greatest joy to have her husband's interest her first and sweetest duty? Ulugh, my darling, go, your country calls you; do not tarry for the loved ones here at home; you have a wife's blessing and her prayers—let me seal it with a kiss." Ulugh Waldo folded his sweet wife in his strong arms; she leaned her head trustingly on his breast; it was then the big tears rolled down his cheeks and fell on Viola's golden hair.

"My noble wife, I am proud more than ever of my little girl. I knew I had a rare jewel, but as the clouds grow darker you shine brighter. Viola, sweet one, you know me too well to think it was cowardice that blanched my cheeks, or the fear of the cannon's mouth that made these tears—no, darling, gladly would I give my life were it necessary for the good of my country; but, little one, I love some one better than my life,

Need I tell who it is? You know only too well, you, my Viola, first, my darling, above all on earth, and next to you, our sweet children. Hear them now as they play hide-and-seek in the yard with laughter and glee. Come, wife, to the window; do you see our little darlings? Look, there is our eldest, Edward! what a good, true boy he is!"

"Yes," said Viola, "and his mamma thinks he is handsome and noble just like his papa."

"And there is sweet Maud, the brightest and smartest little girl in all the country, and poor little Ernest, our second boy, sick ever since he had that dreadful fall; dear little darling, he needs our care more than all our children; and do look at our manly Raymond, he seems to think it his duty to protect his baby sister. And what shall we say of our sweet, saucy, loving, naughty, mischievous Edith, with her golden curls and big, laughing, wicked, yet divine eyes? Papa's baby pet, how she loves me, and oh, how I love her—but, wife, it will tire you to stand so long. Come, darling, let us sit by this cool window, while I tell you something else. Give me your hand, I take as much pleasure in holding it now, love, as when you were my bonnie bride; you would not before that time, even though you knew I was crazy for one little touch of your finger. Bend near, sweet one, and listen to my last words before I leave for the battlefield, to fight for my home and native land.

"Viola, you think you can read my heart, but for once I am glad you cannot, for I feel it is bleeding at the thought of leaving my precious wife and darling children. When I am gone I fear I shall never see them more. I should banish this thought, however, for God holds our destiny in His hands and He doeth all things well—but listen—I hear some one calling."

CHAPTER III.

“Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.”

—*Tennyson.*

THE battle of Manassas had raged fiercely for many hours; but all had become quiet now, and night had thrown her sable mantle in pity o'er that dark and bloody field; and the pale, full moon cast her weird, silvery rays athwart that awful scene.

Among the wounded was the gallant Waldo. As he was one of the bravest, he was found in the front ranks of the battle, and was now giving his life as a sacrifice for his country. Yes, Ulhugh Waldo had fallen mortally wounded and was lying on the damp, cold ground in his life blood, that was now slowly ebbing away. Oh! could you read the thoughts of that dying man? A relief it would be to die and rest from pain; but what of darling wife and precious children, and one little babe that has never known a father's kiss, no tossing up and down in papa's strong, manly arms? And let it here be written, a father can love with the same undying devotion as a mother, even if he has never borne this reputation. Does not God compare His love to that of a father's pity for his children?

“Is it true my poor wife can live but a few days? Sweet it will be to meet her in heaven, but oh! what will become of the six orphan children? The world was kind to them when they had a father and mother's care; then they needed no other attention, but now in

their direst distress, when they cry for pity abuse alone will be their portion."

The big tears rolled down Mr. Waldo's cheek and mingled with the pool of blood that poured from his wound. The brave man groaned, but it was from his sad thoughts of home and not for any physical pain. He took his large handkerchief and placed it to his wound to stanch, if possible, the fast-flowing blood. His thirst becoming almost unbearable he lifted his canteen to his mouth; there was only a mouthful of water in it, but this would suffice to cool his parched lips. The dying man was about to drink when he heard a piteous cry: "Oh, sir, will you not give me one drop of water? I feel my life depends upon it; water! water! please sir, or I die."

Mr. Waldo turned his head to see who the speaker was. A handsome lad in blue uniform lay just within touch. Even in the flickering rays of the pale moon, one could see this was no mean son of the far North. The white brow was broad and full, and every feature of the wounded youth marked him as a son of high and noble birth.

"My good lad, I am glad you spoke in time. I am older and can stand hardships better than you. Take this water and drink it, my boy. I am thankful I have it to give you."

The thirsty youth took the canteen and drained it to its last drop. "Oh, thank you sir, I feel better already. If I only had something now to tie about my arm to stop the blood, but I do believe I shall bleed to death before I can get any aid."

"Let me see your arm, my lad, I am somewhat of a surgeon myself. Yes, it is a painful wound, but nothing dangerous, if we can stop the bleeding."

In another moment Mr. Waldo had snatched the

handkerchief from his own wound and with the assistance of the lad bound the cloth tightly about the boy's arm.

"I think this will answer now, until you can get further help, my boy."

But the exertion was too great for Mr. Waldo. His wound seemed to open afresh and mother earth received, drop by drop, his life blood.

"Sir, what can I do to repay you for your kindness? I feel that my life will be saved through what you have done for me."

"My boy, do not thank me. I did no more than I believe your father would have done for a son of mine. I am dying, but there is one thing, however, I would ask of you."

"Tell me what it is, sir. I will do anything you request of me if it is in my power."

"Lad, it is this: I have a baby son, whom I have never seen, born since I came to war; his name is Ulhugh Waldo. If ever you meet him in life and he needs your aid, will you help him?"

"I will, sir, indeed I will."

"My boy, dip your finger in my blood and swear by it, that if ever you can add to the pleasure and happiness of my baby boy, whom I have never seen, yet love with all a father's pure devotion, swear to me, that you will help him."

The finger of the lad was dipped in the flowing blood of Ulhugh Waldo, then the dying man held the boy's hand high. Thud! thud! thud! three drops of dark, muddy fluid came down and beat upon the breast of the dying man with a dull, heavy sound.

"My boy, thy oath is trebly bound. May you take the same sweet joy in coming to my boy's rescue that I did to yours. Go, my lad; thy brother in blue calls

for help; but we are all the same now, because of our trouble. We have lived apart here for a short time, but soon in Heaven many of us, the 'Blue' and the 'Gray' will be reunited as loving brothers! Wife, in death I loved you as in life. Children, papa loved you to the last. Lad, I die—bend and kiss me for my baby boy."

Over the manly figure, the "Blue" over the "Gray," stooped the youthful lad, scarcely more than a child in appearance, and reverently imprinted a kiss on the cold, damp brow of the dying soldier.

"I am ready to go now. Come, Lord Jesus! come quickly! Jesus th-o-u a-r-t h-e-r-e! A-m-e-n!" And thus did the soul of Ullugh Waldo go to meet his God—

"Another's sword has laid him low,
Another's and another's;
And every hand that dealt the blow,
Ah me! It was a brother!"

CHAPTER IV.

“And let me wring your heart, for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff.

—*Shakespeare.*

THE news had come that Mr. Waldo had fallen in battle. But could any one have courage to tell the poor, dying Viola? At last one day after she had slept with an almost deathlike swoon, Viola opened her dark-blue eyes and looked toward the kind physician.

“Oh! I have had such a fearful dream, I thought I saw my dear husband lying on the battlefield bleeding to death; and because of his suffering I cried and moaned. Oh! yes, I know my husband has fallen in battle, mortally wounded. I shall never see him more. What a relief it would be to my mind if I knew he was free from his suffering.”

The good doctor thinking this the best time to break the sad news to Mrs. Waldo, bent near her emaciated form and his voice became tender and tremulous. “Mrs. Waldo, your noble husband is indeed free from pain and is at rest. You know that he was a man pure and righteous, and now that you have an assurance of his happiness in heaven I hope you will try to be calm and bear your troubles as a Christian woman, and as a wife well suited to a godly man.”

Mrs. Waldo gave one long, low moan and held tightly to the bedclothing as if sinking down, down, down. A dreadful darkness seemed to envelop the poor woman—but slowly did this pass away and then

came the big, hot tears from the sunken blue eyes. When Viola used to weep her noble husband wiped away the gathering tears, but now she had to bear her grief in silence and alone. No, not alone, there is One ever near to catch the faintest sigh. To Him, the great Comforter, she would go and pour out her inmost soul. She prayed, and her prayer, though unspoken, gave her renewed strength. She then thought of her poor, helpless children.

"Doctor," I wish you to tell me if you think I will ever get well? You know I have been sick for a long time, so tell me candidly if you think there is any hope whatever of my recovery. I have six helpless children and if I am not going to live I should like to make plans for their future welfare. I have no property, the war has made me as poor as it has made all my neighbors. But if I did have everything, what could six little children do? The eldest is not twelve years old. Doctor, if I am going to die, tell me. I do not fear death, it is only for my darling children I wish to live; but God's will be done, and if I must die I will have to place my little ones where they can be cared for. I could not die in peace knowing my children had no home."

"Mrs. Waldo, if you have any plans to make I would advise you to make them."

"I thank you, doctor, for your candor; I will do so at once. My brothers and sisters have so many children of their own, I doubt if they will take all my darlings, but I have two friends, one an old schoolmate of mine, the other an old college chum of Mr. Waldo. They have no children of their own, and have often wished for one of my darlings. Never did I dream the day would come when I should have to *beg* them to take one of my little angels. Oh! my Maker, help me to

drink this cup and may I not murmur. These friends, Mr. Felix and Mrs. DeLong, are not in this neighborhood. Doctor, I wish you would send for them as soon as convenient, and also tell my brothers and sisters I would like to see them."

The sick woman's request was immediately complied with, and in due time came Mr. Felix and his wife, Mrs. DeLong and husband, and all the brothers and sisters of Mr. and Mrs. Waldo. The sad-hearted Viola sent word for all to come to her room. In a few minutes friends, brothers, and sisters had taken their places around the bedside of the broken-hearted woman. Mrs. Waldo made repeated efforts to speak to those about her, but it seemed almost a deathlike struggle.

"I have sent for you, but I believe it will kill me to tell you why I called you, yet tell you I must, and may my Father in Heaven help me! Sisters, brothers, friends, the doctor has said I can, at best, live but a few more days. Under these circumstances I deem it my duty to provide homes for my little children. I have no money, but some of you have asked me more than once to give you one of my little ones. The day has come when I can grant the request, which at one time, before I would have thought of such a thing I would have had my body severed in twain. Must I say it? Yes! I have sent for you to know which of you will take my jewels." There was a deathlike silence in the room, only broken by the sobs of Mrs. Waldo, when Mrs. DeLong bent over the sick woman and kissed her hot brow.

"Viola, do not grieve, as I have ever loved you from a girl, I will love one of your little darlings. Give to me your youngest little girl, Edith, and when I behold those eyes that look so much like yours I will love her for your sake and the happy days gone by. I have no

children of my own, yet I have always wished to adopt one, but could never find a child that just suited me. I have wealth, even luxury, and every advantage shall be given to your little Edith; and I here solemnly promise, with God as my witness, to do for your child as if she were my own—and here is a friend, I believe, of your husband, Mr. Felix, who wishes to see you.”

“Mrs. Waldo, I have never seen this good woman before, but what she has promised to do for your little girl I will endeavor to do likewise toward another child. I wish a little boy that looks most like his father and with your permission, will take the little boy that is just a year and a half older than his little sister Edith. Yes, I would have for my little boy, Raymond, and to see this child is to love him, for he has one of the best faces I ever saw. Mrs. Waldo, do not grieve because of this child you give to me; to my dying day he shall find in me a father kind and true.”

While the conversation was going on in the sick chamber, the sisters and brothers of Mr. and Mrs. Waldo had retired to another room, and were hotly disputing about the division of the children. Those that had professed most love for the children when they needed no help, were now the very ones who denounced them and called them spoiled and wished to have nothing to do with them. Some said they thought it very hard to take other peoples' children when they could barely support their own. Each man told why he could not take any of the children to his home, but gave ample reasons (to his mind) why each other brother and sister should take a child, and thus they fussed and fumed and quarreled until some of their angry words came to the ears of the poor, sick woman. At last Mr. Lane having taken a second thought, and turning the matter well over in his mind, decided to take a child

who would save him paying servant's hire. "What a fool I have been not to have thought of all this before—why a girl that belongs to you can be made to do anything; wash dishes, cook, iron, milk cows, scour, and no telling what she might save me. I will say at once I will take the eldest girl before some one else thinks of the same thing." So with these thoughts and only his own sordid interest at heart, Mr. Lane arose, and with an air of sanctity said: "I feel it to be a great responsibility to raise another's child, but some one will have to come to the rescue of these dear little children, so I am willing to do my duty, and I will take to my home the eldest girl, Maud."

Mr. Laman remembered he needed another plow hand. "I will take Edward, the eldest boy."

But who would care for Ernest, the afflicted child? This dear little fellow had fallen down the steps when quite small, and having thus injured his spine suffered agony at times, and it was known to every one that he would never again be well. Now Mr. Homan thought this a fine chance to make a good bargain.

"You all know this child is sickly, but if each of you will agree to give me a few dollars per month to defray his expenses I will take him."

Every one in the room agreed to this proposition, not that they desired to help little Ernest, but they feared being called mean and stingy by the other members of the family. There was one exception to this contract, however: Mr. Deely preferred taking a child rather than pay the few dollars a month. He was getting old and wanted a child to wait on him when he should become more feeble. It was true he had a boy of his own, but he thought too much of him to let him work.

"What about the baby boy? It will be quite a difficult task to raise so young a child, but some one will

have to undergo the labor, and it seems the lot has fallen to me, as no one else has offered to take him. Be it so, the little Ulhugh shall be mine."

Mr. Felix and Mrs. DeLong came in the room at this moment.

"We have taken Raymond and Edith."

The aunts and uncles greatly rejoiced at this good news and for awhile the discussion ceased. Mr. Felix thinking that at some future time the aunts and uncles might wish to claim the little boy he had chosen, told Mrs. DeLong he intended making the little Raymond his own by law, so as to prevent further trouble. Mrs. DeLong was glad Mr. Felix had thought of availing himself of the law in securing Raymond, and would herself pursue the same course in reference to Edith. All the aunts and uncles thought this wise of Mr. Felix and Mrs. DeLong and intended to follow their example. In this way they could work the children more and no one would dare interfere. An officer of the law was immediately summoned, witnesses were called in, and the almost dying woman was propped up in bed to sign away her six children. God alone could fathom the sorrow and anguish of that poor creature. If she had been called upon to sign the death warrant of her little darlings she could not have grieved more. One by one, each little boy and each little girl was hers no more; till at last when she came to sign away her little babe, Ulhugh—he that bore his father's name—the pen fell from her thin hand and sobs shook her form. The quill was soon given back, however, and with an effort that seemed to take her very life away, Viola Waldo signed the sixth and last paper, and then fell back on her pillow almost senseless.

Mrs. DeLong wished to remain with her dear friend, but her husband had a pressing business engagement

in New York, which made it impossible for him to tarry another hour at Mrs. Waldo's home, and as Mr. Felix had to return immediately to Philadelphia to attend to matters of urgency, Edith and Raymond's clothes had to be packed forthwith.

Old Mammy Finn felt the judgment day must be near at hand. As the dear old soul folded each little dress and each little apron, she moaned and groaned, mumbling some inarticulate phrases to herself, and wiping the big tears from her good, honest eyes. "Oh! my heart, what gwine be de next ting? Is da gwine to tak' Misses' chillen from her 'fore she gwine dead? Can't da let her be put under de groun' fo da sap'rate sister an brodder?"

But go the children must, and oh, what a pitiful sight! The darling little Edith did not realize more than that she was going to town to get candy and apples. She went around nodding her little curly head and saying to her brothers and sisters: "Oh, me so happy! me doin' wid de dood lady and she say she doin' to det me a heap ub putty tings, and me doin' to bing my 'ittle baby budder tum and all you tum, and nursy tum too, an' she doin' to det me a dolly too, and when my fete mamma dets well she will dess my dolly so putty so I tan sow it to my dear papa when he tums home—but dear papa stays 'way from his pet Evif so long, me so tired waitin' for him to tum home, and lub and tiss his 'ittle baby."

Was it strange Mrs. DeLong had to brush the tears from her eyes before she could see to tie on little Edith's cap? Hastening as much as possible their necessary departure, Mrs. DeLong took the little darling in her arms. "Edith dear, let us go and tell mamma good-by, you must be a good little girl and not cry, for mamma is sick and we must be very quiet." Mrs.

DeLong then opened softly the door of the sick-room. There rested Mrs. Waldo as white as the sheets on which she lay and she seemed now almost rigid in death. Mrs. DeLong not wishing to disturb her friend, whispered to Edith: "Throw a kiss to mamma, my darling, we will wake her if we go any nearer." The child kissed her chubby hands again and again to her mother, yet Mrs. Waldo knew of nothing that was going on in this world. The little Edith lisped sweetly, as Mrs. DeLong was closing the door: "My fete mamma, me tumin' back to see you to-morrow an' me doin' to bring you tum putty ibbins to make you nice bows for your bootiful dolden hair, des like mine, so papa tays." Edith then went around telling her brothers and sisters good-by, the two eldest of whom were crying, for they had begun to realize things were going wrong, and then she told her aunts and uncles good-by. These kind relatives did not hurt themselves with tears, for they looked upon the child's departure as a good rid-dance. But when Aunt Finn, the kind old black mammy nurse, took little Edith up in her arms and hugged and squeezed her, and then put her down and ran out the back door so that she would not see the little one start off in the carriage, it was then Edith commenced to cry. "Me don't wanten do, ta use nursy tyin, she want me to tay wid her. Ou do det te putty tings and me will tay here til ou tums back."

Almost the same scene transpired at the departure of Raymond, the little boy Mr. Felix had taken. Mrs. DeLong and Mr. Felix having taken their departure, the owners, for no other name is applicable to those who had taken the children, told the little darlings to make haste with their packing, for they ought not to be about their sick mother any longer. Maud, the eldest daughter, begged so hard to stay with her dear mother.

"The doctor says my poor mother can live only a short time, please aunt and uncle do not take me from her."

But her aunt and uncle had taken council together. "We must show her from the first, our will shall not be disputed. You have got to come now, and we do not wish you to be acting a baby either. It is not essential that you should kiss your mother, you are putting on entirely too many airs." So poor Maud only looked at her mother from a distance and was leaning her head against the door crying when her uncle caught hold of her arm. "Stop that foolishness and come with me this minute." When Mr. Laman told Edward to come with him the child went without a word, for he had found words were of no avail, but could you have seen the boy's face you would have known his stoicism did not mean submission to the will of a cruel uncle. Then, when the little Ernest, the poor afflicted child, was told that he would have to go, the dear child crept softly into his mother's room and knelt beside her bed and buried his little head in the folds of the covering.

"Oh! my dear mamma," and his little voice quivered. "I know when I leave you I won't have anybody to love me. When I am tired and sick, who will ever kiss me and be sorry for me, and pet your little Ernest?" How he longed to throw his arms about his precious mother and kiss her, but he knew he could not do this without disturbing her, so he simply pressed his lips to the pillow on which his dear mother lay. As he did so, he touched the thin hand of the poor, sick woman, who gave a low moan. Then the dear little fellow with a deep sigh (for one so young) left his mother's room feeling indeed a friendless orphan. Mr. Deely wishing Aunt Finn to take charge of the little Ulhugh until the child should be large enough to care for himself, endeavored to find a plausible excuse so that the

nurse might keep the baby. "I think it is a shame to take the children from my dear sister in this way; we should wait until the end has come before she is bereft of all her loved ones." Oh, it is hard to believe any one could be so full of hypocrisy. Thus was Ullugh left with Aunt Finn, to the delight of that good old soul, who had almost lost courage but now that the baby was spared to her she felt she had something to cling to.

How long did little Ullugh rest in his black mammy's arms? Did his uncle ever come again for him? What was the end of the little boy? Ah! shall you know it all—

" Since knowledge is but sorrow's spy,
It is not safe to know."

CHAPTER V.

“ Travellers must be content.”

—*Shakespeare.*

WHEN Mr. Dean returned from the war he found the lovely homes of his neighbors, together with his own beautiful mansion, burned to ashes, his provisions all taken, and horses and cattle driven away. The good man felt that he too must go, for he had no home now to induce him to remain longer.

“I will go to another part of the country and try and rebuild my fortune. I may have more heart to work among new scenes and new surroundings, for I do not care to stay here where everything reminds me of that happy past, which can never be again. Yes, I had best leave for another State.”

Oh, what a day was that, when the Dean family had to start they knew not where! Only one wagon and two mules left out of a large number. Yet Mr. Dean hoped these would be sufficient to take his family and two trusty servants, “old Daddy Mike” and “Mammy Rachel,” who said they would go with “Mosser” (this dialect, although quaint, is in perfect keeping with the negroes in some sections of the far South) and “Misses” if they had to walk all the way and starve. “No, Mosser, we do stick to unner ’till de good Lord do call us fum dis here worl’ of sin and sorrow, we sure do, so help us Je Lord.”

Was it strange Mr. Dean brushed away a tear.

From whatever source a kindness might come he was always a man to appreciate its worth.

"Well, Mike, if you insist on going, I will do all I can for you."

As no time was to be lost, Mr. Dean gave his orders to Daddy Mike to pack and store away in the wagon some of the more necessary things that would be needed in a regular camp life. Each child wished to carry away some little keepsake, one a chair, one a doll, one a pretty cup, one a book, but baby Myrtle, the child of "The Ides of March," that ill-omened day, took her little kitty in her arms and pressed it closely to her breast, kissing it again and again. When her old nurse saw the cat, her superstition broke forth.

"De law, baby, unner mustn't tak dat cat. I alway hurd dat it be bad luck for to take cats wid unner when unner lebe a place."

But baby Myrtle held fast to her kitty, and when Mammy Rachel tried to take it away she screamed so that the kitty gave a piteous mew.

Mrs. Dean sat weeping and wringing her hands. "Who would ever have thought that I, *Mrs. Dean*, would come to this—the richest woman in the land, to ride through the country in a wagon drawn by mules, and to have to camp out upon the wayside?"

Mrs. Dean was not the only woman that could be agreeable and affable in prosperity, but become soured in days of adversity. Her husband, however, was good under all circumstances, and tried in every way to comfort his wife.

"Do not grieve, my dear, the Lord sends affliction that He may purify us and make us better men and women. Let us receive His chastisement with meekness and submission."

"Mr. Dean," and the wife's voice was harsh and

cold, "leave me, I do not believe in your God and will not listen to your religion." The pious husband turned away with a deep sigh, wondering to himself how it was possible for one so beautiful as his wife to be so ungodly. Their servants remained and performed their accustomed duties until the last moment. Their homespun aprons often going to their eyes to wipe away the honest tears.

"Jest tink dat Mosser and Misses hab to leab us; what is we gwine ter do, de Lord only knows." Each servant took her favorite among the children in her arms and pressed him warmly to her breast. Lord bless unner, honey. Good-by, good-by."

The children gave the servants that they loved most many little mementoes, and the good old black "mam-mies" and "daddies," gave to their favorite pets some token of love, a wooden paddle, a spoon, a tiny piggin, a monkey made out of a peach nut, an alligator tooth, a snail shell, a string of beads, a basket made out of pasteboard and the scrapings of cow horns, and many other quaint articles that highly delighted the children who began to store their gifts away in the wagon, believing them to be treasures of great value. Everything being now ready for the journey, Mr. Dean stood in the wagon and stretched forth his hands for silence.

"My servants, the time has come for us to part. I say good-by with a heavy heart for I know that I shall never again meet some of you on earth, but I have read the Bible often enough in your midst for you all to know the straight and narrow way, and if we act right nothing will keep us from meeting in heaven."

When Mr. Dean sat down there was a wail of sorrow that went up from the heart of every honest, faithful negro. Mr. Dean instructed old Daddy Mike to drive on, for his heart was now full to overflowing. When

the wagon started with its slow, heavy movement, some of the negroes fell to the ground in a swoon, many tore their hair, others moaned and groaned, with their bodies swaying to and fro, while others leaped upon the wagon and clung to it as if to stay its progress, uttering words that sounded like a dirge.

"De Lord do bless unner Mosser, de Lord do bless unner Misses, and de Lord do bless unner little chilun; de Lord do please do dis for de sake of us poor black niggers, de Lord grant us dis yer partition, Amen!"

The wagon was out of the yard by this time, and as it passed out of sight the poor negroes could be seen wiping their eyes with their big red handkerchiefs and homespun aprons. The children in the wagon cried and would not be comforted. They waved their little hands and threw kisses to their old black mammies. In fact they did everything to show their love for the good old faithful servants they were leaving behind. A bend in the road separated forever those who had lived so happily together. Ah, sad day; yes, sad alike to both master and slave.

Baby Myrtle seeing her mother looking sad, went up to her and laying her little head on her lap said, "Mamma, is oo sick? my dear mamma, me so sorry."

"No, child, I am not sick; go away. I don't want to be bothered with children now; I have enough to turn me crazy as it is—here, nurse, take this child."

It was not necessary for Mrs. Dean to call Myrtle's nurse. The child was quick and sensitive, and if the mother had looked at the little one and seen the pain depicted upon her face and the sad, downcast countenance, she would have known this child would not long bestow her love on one that would not return it. The baby turned to her nurse with tears in her eyes. She did not cry, but her little heart was broken. Oh! little

Myrtle, this is only the beginning of sorrows. Your mother has never loved you. Before you came into this beautiful world your mother did not want you, and then when you were born it was on the fatal "Ides of March," and your mother received you with a frown that was as dark as that ill-omened day. When your laughing eyes met your mother's as you lay on her lap to be nourished, never did an answering smile greet you. No wonder you cried and no one could tell why, your little soul knew there was something wanting—it was love! only love!

"Chilun," and the little ones crowded about Mammy Rachel, "unner der been good chilun, I is got fresh candy for unner. I make it for unner, case I knowed unner want some on dis here trabbling."

After the children had eaten their candy Mammy Rachel told them she would be ready in a minute to tell them a ghost story; and "all about dem memaids and jack-may-lanterns, and dem hanted houses." Now, did you ever know children to tire of these dreadful tales? What if it did frighten them, as soon as Mammy Rachel finished one story they shouted for another. "I better not tell you no more, case unner will be too scared to sleep to-night; ax Mike to gib unner a little tune."

The children now crowded about Daddy Mike, demanding a tune. The old man then put the reins between his knees and throwing his head to one side, placed his mouth-harp to his lips and soon were heard weird, curious sounds:

"Ungle, wangle, single, sangle, mingle, wangle—ding: ungle, wangle, fingle, fangle, dingle, dangle—ting: single, sangle, mingle, mangle, ringle, rangle, tingle, tangle—ting: mingle, mangle, tingle, tangle, lingle, langle, fingle, fangle—fing! Now if the great Beethoven had heard this discordant medley it is prob-

able he would have committed suicide on the spot; but remember there are few that have their souls attuned to sweet concord of sounds. The "jingle" and "tingle" were the very things that delighted the children, and they shouted again and again for more. Old Uncle Mike played another and another tune and thus did the day pass away. Dusk settled o'er the earth just as the small band of refugees neared the banks of a beautiful stream. There the weary travelers encamped for the night. Old Daddy Mike gathered up all the light wood knots and built a big fire. Mammy Rachel went to the wagon and got materials for cooking supper.

The meal being over Mr. Dean called the children and servants about him: "Stir up the fire, Mike, while I go to the wagon and get the Bible." The sacred book was soon brought, and some of the children sat on old logs, while others on the long tongue of the wagon. The servants stood respectfully back of the little ones. What a picture: The large trees festooned in long gray moss; the sighing of the tall pines; the low murmur of the crystal stream, as it rippled o'er its white pebbled bed, kissed by the silvery moon the bright fire crackling and blazing, as it cast its flickering rays upon the peaceful group. There were the boys, two missing, but those that remained were as handsome as were ever before seen. The girls from budding womanhood to baby Myrtle, would have each made a model sufficiently beautiful for the artistic taste of the great Angelo. Mrs. Dean, haughty and cold as the frost that enveloped the night, sat in her queenly beauty, thinking of her past glory. Mammy Rachel held the little Myrtle in her lap and ever and anon whispered to the child. "Unner must be good baby now, papa gwine to read de Bible." Daddy Mike stood just a little back of his master, holding his hat in

his hand and looking intently on the ground. His hair was as white as snow, and trustworthiness was stamped in every line of his good, kind face. Mr. Dean with his black hair and eyes, and a face that at times assumed an expression as gentle as an injured fawn, when she pleads for mercy at the hands of the hunter, sat now with the holy Bible on his knee, turning over the leaves of that sacred book.

"Before reading let us sing that grand old hymn: "How Firm a Foundation."

With the exception of Mrs. Dean all joined in the sweet song, even to Daddy Mike and Mammy Rachel. Mr. Dean's deep, melodious bass harmonized well with the rich, clear soprano of his eldest daughter, Catherine. Baby Myrtle tried as best she could to lisp the words of praise. Did you ever hear an old beloved hymn sung in the midst of a forest with the darkness and stillness of night wrapped about you? If you have, you know that not until death will you forget the feeling of reverence that then took possession of you; and if you have not no words can possibly convey to you the inspiration of such an hour.

The song having ceased Mr. Dean turned to the ciii. Psalm commencing: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name." After reading these comforting words there was a prayer of thanksgiving offered to God. When the prayer was ended, the children went to papa to receive their usual good-night kiss. Then Mammy Rachel took the little ones and tucked them away in the wagon.

Mr. Dean remained on a large log by the fire, as there was not enough covering for all. Old Daddy Mike also got near the blaze and gave it a poke. He then sat down on some light wood knots and putting his head in his hands, leaned over till his knees met his face, and in this position was soon fast asleep.

An hour later and all in the little band about that camp fire were lost in deep slumbers, except one little one, whom you would have supposed would have been the first to sleep. This was baby Myrtle. Her little eyes were stretched wide open, for the screeching of the owls, the snoring of Daddy Mike, and the weirdness of the shadows that were cast by the flickering firelight, made the little one afraid. "Nursy, me is told, and me do hear dat dedful noise."

"Yes, hunny, unner is, but mammy is here and she gwine der cubber unner up now and stay by unner so nuthing won't hurt mammy's baby," and then as the old nurse patted the little one to sleep she sang in her quaint way: 'Go to sleep, mammy's sweet baby, go to sleep, mammy's sweet baby; unner des know mammy lub you, unner des know mammy lub you; go to sleep, my sweet baby.'" The little eyelids drooped, the little lips parted into a smile, the old nurse crept by the side of the baby child, and soon the hush of sleep, the silence of the midnight hour, and the ever watchful eyes of our Heavenly Father was upon the weary band of refugees.

CHAPTER VI.

“Come in the evening, or come in the morning;
Come when you're looked for or come without warning.”

—*Thomas O. Davis.*

IN one of the Northern States, in a home of luxury, ease, culture, and refinement, sat Mrs. Lamont, deeply absorbed in thought. For two hours she had tried to read, but had failed. The book lay unheeded in her lap. A deep sigh escaped from her white lips; her bosom heaved; her eyes turned ever and anon to the door, as if looking for some one; the September gale whistled through the keyholes and seemed to mock the sad woman.

Mrs. Lamont could stand it no longer, and arising let the book drop from her lap and paced to and fro in the long room. “Anything, everything! rather than this dreadful suspense; my heart will break if the strain upon it lasts much longer.” Passing her hand over her forehead she brushed back the soft, once auburn tresses, but now gray from sorrow. Her grief was too intense for tears. At last the poor woman sank upon her knees to commune with her God—“Oh, Jesus, take care of my boy. Bring him back to my arms. He is all I have. Master, if it be Thy will, give my precious boy to me again.”

So deep was Mrs. Lamont's grief that she did not heed the gentle knock at her door, nor see some one enter and stand a moment at the threshold and then kneel softly by her side. What a beautiful sight to be-

hold! The high-born lady kneeling with the firelight casting its lights and shadows upon the sad, yet lovely face. Her neat black dress, with spotless white lace at neck and sleeves, made her to appear almost nun-like in her apparel. One hand was on her heart, while the other pressed her throbbing temples. Her face wore an expression of calm submission to the will of God. It was when the struggle was over and Mrs. Lamont felt that God doeth all things well, that some one had entered the room and gazed for a moment on that lovely countenance that seemed as if it were an angel's face.

The scene was one of awe—everything was sacred and holy. The stranger took his soldier's cap respectfully from his light hair, and ere another moment passed he was kneeling by Mrs. Lamont's side. In his hand was a musket and cap; over his shoulder hung a dry canteen; his clothes were dusty and worn; his hair was long yet this did not detract from his youthful face. As these two knelt all nature seemed to have been hushed. The watch-dog had ceased to bark; the winds had been lulled to sleep; the old cat that lay on the soft rug by the fire thought it too much effort to purr; the bronze clock on the marble mantel seemed scarcely to tick; the family portraits in their gilded frames looked solemnly, yet approvingly down, and our Father in heaven saw these two, His children, and loved them.

The stranger's prayer was one of thanksgiving to God; and when Mrs. Lamont uttered: "Oh, God, take care of my boy; bring him to my arms, he is all I have; Master, if it be Thy will give my darling again to me." Some one whispered in a voice so soft that the good woman thought she was dreaming:

"My mother, your prayer is answered; your boy awaits a mother's kiss and blessing."

Do you wonder that Mrs. Lamont was dazed with

surprise, as she turned to clasp her precious boy to her now exultant heart? Mrs. Lamont kissed her boy and then held him from her to look into his face, then showered kisses upon him, alternately crying and laughing. Lenfred laughed and blushed deeply as his mother began scrutinizing him, for he knew his apparel would not bear close inspection. The mother knew why the color came to her boy's handsome face, and she kissed him again to put him at ease. Neither mother nor son spoke, and there is no telling how long this pantomime might have continued had not the supper bell rung and made them conscious of their surroundings.

"Mother, I believe it will take me a week to make myself presentable; I cannot sit at the same table with you, so please prepare something for me and let me eat."

The good mother did not wait for her son to finish this sentence, but putting her arms about his neck, led him to the cheerful dining room, where was spread on the snowy tablecloth all the dainty viands a king could desire, much less a hungry soldier boy. Leave mother and son to their supreme happiness. Oh! the joy of that reunion! Oh! the pleasure of that evening! Oh! the rapture of those hearts once severed but *now united in almost heavenly love!*

CHAPTER VII.

“ I cannot but remember such things were,
That were most precious to me.”

—*Shakespeare.*

MRS. WALDO, strange as it may seem, did not die, but still lingered on her sick-bed to the amazement of all her friends. Her many relatives who had seemingly thought so much of her when in prosperity and wealth, now that she was ill, poverty-stricken, and could be of no service to them, left her for their own homes. Her nearest neighbor was more than a mile away, so it was seldom she saw any one. Mammy Finn tenderly and gently nursed her and supplied her every possible want. The kind physician came day after day, regardless of the fact that he would never get any pay. God be praised for those pure hearts that live feeling that life is not to be spent in hoarding up riches to be devoted to themselves, while the orphan and widow cry for help. Dr. DeSay was one of the many physicians who never thought of self. May God ever bless those men, who, regardless of weather, even when sick themselves, strive to relieve others; those consecrated physicians who while, they administer to the physical wants of their patients, never lose an opportunity to encourage and strengthen the souls of those who are sick.

Oh! physician! what a grand calling you have!
May you ever be true to your trust! God shower his

richest blessings upon all who are physicians in deed and in truth.

The day Mr. Waldo left for the war Viola looked as young and pretty as when a bride, but could the husband now see the wife he would not recognize his once beautiful Viola. Mr. Waldo had been a devoted husband, and the fair hands of his Viola seldom found more service than that of stroking the silken black locks of her handsome husband. Viola often tried to work, but her servants would cry out in holy horror that such a pretty little thing would soil her white, dimpled hands. She would run to her husband when he came home, and tell him how Aunt Jane and Mammy Finn, and in fact all the servants, would not let her do a single thing. "Why, I believe they think I am a doll-baby;" and then she would look at her husband with those big violet eyes, and pout her ruby lips, and then fall in Ullugh's strong arms that had opened wide to enfold his little wife, saying as he did so:

"Why, no, my pet, you are no doll-baby, but an angel instead, and from all I can find out angels do not work. Poor little girl. I am sorry you should have so much trouble, but you know the fairest sky must have its clouds. I know, however, my little pet will be brave now that the clouds are coming so thick and fast. I hope my love for my sweet wife yes, the—sweetest wife in all the world—will enable her to bear up under her many burdens." Ullugh kissed many times his pet's dimpled cheeks that were now crimson with blushes. Viola knew her husband was teasing her, but where is the wife that does not love such rapturous vexing? If Mr. Waldo had loved Viola as a sweetheart, he worshipped her as a wife—his gentleness and tenderness to her brought to remembrance the chivalry and gallantry

of ancient knights for their lady loves. Yes, the husband had more than excelled the lover in all the little courtesies of everyday life. Was it strange that when Viola's husband was called from her, she was none the less lovely than when a sweet, blushing bride? Do not censure and call the Southern women "Poor little dependent things." The chivalry, gallantry, and manliness of her men have made her women trusting, clinging tendrils. The Southern gentlemen wished their wives and daughters to be loving, confiding lovers of home; and to be so attractive and cheerful and accomplished, that when father, brother, husband came from work, home should be the sweetest, happiest, most blessed spot on earth! Only men, they said, were made to work and toil. A typical Southern gentleman during the old *régime* would have thought himself more than a brute had he allowed his wife and daughters to cook, wash, or do the least drudgery. There was nothing too hard for the husband to perform, but for the beautiful wife and fair daughters where did the good man ever find anything he thought easy enough for their white hands? Oh! you brave, noble men of our fair, sunny South—long may you live in history and in song, and may nations rise to copy your true and sturdy manliness, and may God bless you and your sons, even unto your children's children. Viola was herself now only in name. Grief had stolen the roses from her cheeks and strewn many silver threads through her sunny, golden hair. The once fair and rounded neck and arms were now in unison with the thin pinched cheeks, and caused one to turn away and heave a deep sigh. No, death did not come to Mrs. Waldo, but, alas, her illness had left her only a shadow of the once lovely Viola.

CHAPTER VIII.

“The drying of a single tear has more
Of honest fame than shedding seas of gore.”

—*Byron.*

MR. DEAN traveled with his family many days, and inquired of the people of the country so as to decide on some place where he might permanently locate. The children treasured in their minds for years afterward many curious things that happened on that long and tedious journey. Mr. Dean had crossed the border line of his own State, and had gone far south into another, when Mrs. Dean became suddenly ill, and as she was unable to travel further they stopped in a small cabin by the wayside. It was a miserable crumbling log hut, with large cracks filled with daubed earth; a stick-and-mud chimney that looked as if it might fall at any moment; no floor but the dark powdered dirt; no window but a hole cut in the logs; and no water within a quarter of a mile.

This for awhile was to be Mrs. Dean's home. What a step! from a grand mansion to a crumbling hovel! The small, one-roomed hut was made as habitable as possible. There was erected in one corner a stationary bed, made of old boxes and small pine saplings, two sides of which were nailed into the logs of the cabin to keep it from falling. Upon this unsightly and uncomfortable improvised resting place the proud, queenly Mrs. Dean was only too glad to lay her weary head. Spiders, bugs, lizards, snakes, and even scorpions were

found in the hut, to the fear and consternation of the children and servants, but all these horrors had to be endured, for Mrs. Dean was now too ill to be removed. Mr. Dean nursed his wife through that long spell of typhoid fever with all the devotion of a true husband; but had she not possessed a wonderful constitution she could never have endured the privations and vicissitudes of that trying period. No doctor ever came near the hut, for there was none to be found, but so tender was the care Mrs. Dean received, and so attentive were her husband and Mammy Rachel, that at the end of several weeks she was able to sit up, and in course of time she was herself once more.

Mr. Dean began to travel again and in due time he came to a country luxuriant in sugar cane, cotton, watermelons, green corn, sweet potatoes, peas, ground-nuts, chooffers, clover, hay, oats, and everything needed by man and beast. In the lowlands were long rows of rice, and in the fence corners were blackberry bushes covered with luscious fruit. The woods were full of huckleberries, and earlier in the spring the May-haw had covered the ponds with its red fruit. Peaches, pears, apples, figs, pomegranates and plums were plentiful. Surely this place could satisfy the longings of any planter; and Mr. Dean's heart beat with exultant expectations as he rode on in search of a dwelling which he soon found.

Several weeks passed, however, before Mr. Dean could make permanent arrangements for the purchase of the land. He was indeed a happy man when he realized that he had once more a home for his family, for they had long been sadly in need of one; yet it took days of laborious work to get the house in a condition to be occupied.

All in the family who were large enough, worked

hard, with the exception of Mrs. Dean. She had no intention of ever degrading herself by scrubbing and scouring. When Myrtle saw her older sisters climbing to the top of the large goods boxes, piled one upon the other that they might reach, to wash and wipe the high ceilings, her heart beat, for she expected to see them fall every minute. But laughingly and cheerfully did they do their work, for they had too much of their father's blood in their veins to shirk whatever might be put upon them. Myrtle did her part by handing the rags that would drop to the floor, and the child would go every few minutes and get fresh water for her sisters, and see that they kept supplied with soap; but for little Myrtle—she seemed apart from everything and everybody; no one understood her, and even her brothers and sisters misconstrued her purest motives; her mother despised her; and her father, influenced by his wife, heeded her not; so she was left to grope her way as best she could. She was no longer the once beautiful child with chubby limbs and full-arched eyes, but had grown thin, pale, and almost ghost-like. Her cheeks, once so round and full, were sunken almost to the bone; her hair, once so beautiful and flowing, was now cut short in order to do away with the trouble of caring for it. But in this wide world of ours God generally gives us one friend even though he comes from a place we least expect. Even now little Myrtle found a friend Cecil Clair. But, who is Cecil Clair?

Many years before, Cecil's grandfather came over from England with Mr. Dean's father, and settled in Virginia. They were devoted friends, and in the course of time wooed and won two girls who had been friends from childhood. The friends had a double wedding, and for years afterward lived side by side in a beautiful Virginia village. Their children grew up

together, and learned to love each other as brothers and sisters; this continued as the years went by. But in time Mr. Dean thought it his interest to go far south, and Mr. Clair decided at the same time to move to New York. Each worked to better his condition. In time Mr. Dean became a wealthy Southern planter, and Mr. Clair reached the topmost round in the mercantile world. The families though far separated continued to visit each other—the Clairs coming South in winter, and the Deans going North in summer. The boys attended the same university in Virginia, and roomed together, and thus true friendship was handed down from father to son even to the third generation. Then it was the cruel war came on. Could friends fight against friends? Must one wear the “gray” while the other donned the “blue?” But duty demanded it even though the blood should curdle and the heart stop its pulsations at the thought of such a direful necessity.

Mr. Clair, Cecil’s father, answered promptly his country’s call, as did also Mr. Dean. Mr. Clair stated in his will that should he fall in battle he desired Mr. Dean, if not slain also, to become his son’s sole guardian, and that he should live South with his (Mr. Dean’s) family until Cecil became of age. Cecil’s mother had died previous to this, and thus in accordance with Mr. Clair’s will, the handsome, dashing Cecil came to make his home with the Deans.

Mrs. Dean received him cordially, and gave him the best room in the house. She knew he was the sole heir to his father’s vast estate, and this alone was sufficient to obtain her good will. However pure a person might be in character, should he lack money and a great name, Mrs. Dean would never condescend so much as to speak to him. Another reason for Mrs. Dean’s being so agreeable to Cecil was that she had an only sister—

Leita, whom, for a wonder, she idolized. Leita was as different from Mrs. Dean, as if they had not been related. She was gentle, retired, and possessed that great element wanting in Mrs. Dean—the religion of Jesus Christ.

Mrs. Dean had made up her mind to use her influence in bringing about a marriage between Cecil and Leita, but was careful to guard her thoughts well, not permitting her husband to know them, for well she knew he would say: “Leave Cecil to marry whom he will. God forbid that I should do anything to my friend’s child, save what is right and honest.”

Mr. Dean managed Cecil’s property as Mr. Clair would have done; and he dressed Cecil as he was dressed in his father’s lifetime; he also sent him to the finest colleges in the land when his own children were not able to go, and treated him far better and allowed him far more privileges than his own children. Well did Mr. Clair know when he entrusted his son to Mr. Dean that he would receive a father’s care, for he knew him to be a man of deep convictions, with a pure, Christian heart, thoroughly business-like, and having just such principles as he would like instilled in his son. He feared, however, that Mr. Dean in his anxiety to do the best for Cecil would be too lenient with him and spoil him. Cecil had visited many times before the home of Mr. Dean, and all had learned to love him, so now that he was to live with Mr. Dean it gave him joy. Well did he remember the little Myrtle with laughing eyes and fat, chubby cheeks, and now when he gazed on her wan face with her sad eyes and thin, shadowy form he wondered to himself if she were the same little Myrtle. A look of pity came into his eyes as he stooped and printed a kiss on her sweet lips, but Myrtle, unaccustomed to caresses, ran off crying as if her heart would break. Had she at last found a friend?

CHAPTER IX.

“A wrecked soul, bruised with adversity.”

—*Shakespeare.*

How Mrs. Waldo existed after the war would be hard to tell, for her beautiful home had been destroyed, and there had been left to her only one old blind mule, one cow, several pigs, a few chickens, and a small quantity of fodder. Old Uncle Jack plowed with the blind mule, and made enough to keep his mistress from starving. Aunt Finn cooked and churned, and did the little that was to be done about the cottage. Mrs. Waldo had never been strong since her illness, and to add to her sickness she grieved so much to see her children that at times she felt she would lose her mind. Had she been well, gladly would she have walked the many weary miles that separated her from them, if only to have kissed them once again in life; but she was a confirmed invalid, and was scarcely ever able to rise from her bed without the assistance of Aunt Finn.

She wrote to them—but what answer did the poor woman receive from her brothers and sisters? “The doctor says you cannot live long, and when your children left you, they thought you dying. You know you do nothing for them any way, so let well enough alone; they think they have no mother, and this is true in that you are helpless to aid them. We do not let them know you are alive, for we know they would be dissatisfied and want to see you; and, now if you are a

true mother, you will let them alone while they are happy. If you had money to provide for your children, it would be quite different."

Ah, were these words such as would make a poor invalid mother well? Mrs. Waldo could not write to her friend, Mrs. DeLong, for she had gone to Europe, and no one knew her address. She wrote to Mr. Felix, but her letters were returned from the dead-letter office. So the poor woman was enveloped in perplexity, and found darkness everywhere she turned. There was left to her, however, one ray of sunshine—little Ulhugh. The child's love for his mother was sweet and touching. Oh, could you have seen Ulhugh's big, merry, black eyes; round, rosy, brown cheeks; auburn curls, and the sweet smile that played about the corners of his ruby lips, with the dimples ever and anon playing hide-and-seek over his joyous face, you would have unconsciously murmured: "What a pity the child is a boy." Yet you could not mistake Ulhugh for a girl. Every line and curve of his face, every movement and gesture told you he was a boy, and verily the son of a noble father; a child capable of impressing himself on all about him. Look at the little fellow now, with his big Newfoundland pet—Vincio. The dog had been accidentally hurt, and the little fellow is trying to tie a string about the injured foot of his pet. But he has not learned the art of tying, and as fast as he wraps the string and turns it loose, it drops off. All the time the little doctor talks encouragingly to his pet.

"Don't tie Binto, me is sorry ou is hurty, but me will tie ou foot up, me will," and then the child would stop and hug his Vincio.

The dog seemed to know he had some one to sympathize with him and stood still, as if to see how his little master would succeed in his new profession. As fast

as Ullugh would twist the string and give it a jerk—his way of tying a string—the dog would flinch, and the child would stop to pet and soothe his patient; so at the end of twenty minutes he was no nearer to binding his Vinco's foot than when he began.

"Poor Binto, I tell ou what les us do—les us do to my dear mamma, she can tie it widdout hurtin' ou, tause my mamma tan do eny fing. Why, she tan des tiss it and make it well." With these words Ullugh caught his dog lovingly around the neck—"Tum on now Binto, poor Binto, I is very sorry for ou, but me hibs ou, me do." Vinco, seeming to understand all that was said to him, hopped along as best he could by the side of his fair young master until the little fellow led his pet into the presence of his mother. "Mamma, I is bingin' ou Binto. He is hurt his poor footy, and me wants ou to tiss it, and make it well des like ou do me wen me dets hurt. I tised him mamma, but my tisses don't chure him; but ou sweet tisses will chure him in a minute des like dey do me."

The child looked inquiringly into his mother's face as she lay propped up in bed darning a little blue gingham apron for her Ullugh to wear on the morrow. It was quite evident the little fellow thought his request a simple one, and that it would be granted by his mother, for when had she ever said nay to her idol?

"Now, mamma, top ou sewin' dest a ittle file, it ont take but dest a minute to tiss Binto." Vinco hung his head, as if he knew his little master was making a dreadful mistake, but waited patiently for the outcome of such grievous words. Mrs. Waldo put her sewing from her, and caught her darling in her arms and covered him with caresses.

"Oh, mamma dear, top, me is not hurt, it is Binto is hurt wite here on his foot; now tiss it twick, so it tan

det well," and quick as thought the child sprang from his mother's embrace, and held up Vinco's foot in his little chubby hands. The face that met Mrs. Waldo was one of troubled anxiety, yet full of expectant hope for the relief of his pet. Now Mrs. Waldo had never at any time taken a special delight in dogs, nevertheless, she was a woman who could never see the least thing suffer—not even something she disliked. But as she looked at her child there was a touch of merriment in her sad blue eyes. "My boy, a nice, kind doctor you would make and simple, sweet remedies you would use, but, my darling, let me put a little opodeldoc on a rag, and bind it to Vinco's foot, and it will get well sooner than if mamma kissed it;" and the mother began immediately to bind tenderly Vinco's foot. The poor dog seemed very grateful for the kind act, and tried to show his appreciation as best he could in his mute, dumb way by wagging his tail and rubbing his head against Mrs. Waldo's hands.

"Tank ou, mamma dear. I is doin' to be a dottor when I dets to be a big man, and den I will make ou wel, so ou tan wun a wace wid me. A nice dottor I is doin to be, not a bad one; oh no, a mart one. Good-by, mamma dear, tum on Bintu, ou is most rel now ain't ou?" In another moment the bright, sunny face, was gone, and the mother was left to herself to ponder over the words of her baby boy—"a nice dottor I is doin' to be, not a bad one; oh no, a mart one."

CHAPTER X.

"The sad vicissitude of things."—*Lawrence Sterne.*

"And thus the heart will break, yet broken live on."—*Byron.*

MRS. WALDO was sitting in her room busily engaged in curling the auburn hair of her baby boy when Aunt Finn knocked and entered. "Missis, here is a letter for you, give to me by one of de neighbors. He said he had jist bin to town, and as hit was not much outen his way, he took pleasure in bringing it to you. I hope the Lord hit ain't no bad news." Mrs. Waldo kissed tenderly her little boy—"Go play now my darling; mamma has finished your hair, and you look so sweet and pretty." After hugging his mother, Ulhugh took his nurse by the hand and together they left the room. Mrs. Waldo with fast beating heart, she knew not why, hastily tore open the letter:

"PINE GROVE, Sept. 1, 18—.

"MY DEAR SISTER: I hear that instead of improving you are rapidly declining, and that ere long your course will have been run and your journey ended. Your boy, Ulhugh, is now past seven, and must be badly in need of a father, which office it is my duty to fill; for you will remember he is mine, having been signed to me by you when he was a baby. I hope you will not be chicken-hearted about giving him up, but will do so without any further trouble.

"I am now fully able to do for him, and as you are sick and not in condition to care for him, and as he will have to come to me sooner or later, I think it is better

for me to take him while he is young that I may train him correctly. I will send my servant for him tomorrow. Have him ready.

“Your fond brother,
“A. D. DEELY.”

The letter fell from the poor woman's hands, and she burst into tears. “Will they take my last hope and comfort? Will my trouble never cease?” Ulhugh, who had come to his mother's room to get his ball, saw her weeping, and running up to her put his arms about her neck.

“Mamma dear, what is the matter? Have I hurt your feelings?”

“My darling, you have never hurt my feelings in your life.”

“Well, mamma, what is the matter, won't you tell me? I am the only one you have to tell.” He endeavored as best he could in his childish way to comfort her; yet his words were like daggers to the poor woman's heart. Yes, he was the “only one” she had, and this was why she wept. Mrs. Waldo threw her arms about her little boy's neck and drew him closer to her almost bleeding heart.

“Oh, that I could always shield and protect you my darling—but not so.”

“Listen to mother, my boy, perhaps I can make you understand, although you are but a child in years: When you were a little baby in long dresses, Ulhugh, your father was called to war and was killed, my boy. Mamma was then taken sick, darling, and the doctors said I had only a few days to live. I then tried to find homes for my dear little children. I sent for my brothers and sisters and two friends and asked them if they would take care of my children for me. Oh, darling, it made mamma so sorry to give her little jewels away.

All of your brothers and sisters were taken away that same day, you only, my darling, was left, but to-day I received a letter from your uncle—oh, my Father, give me strength to tell my boy all—that you would have to leave mamma; that to-morrow he would send a servant for you. Oh, my precious, you know now why mamma is so sad.”

Ulhugh listened in quietude, and when his mother had finished he only drew a deep sigh. Oh! evil day when children sigh! Seeing him so silent, the mother drew him closer to her breast.

“Ulhugh, my darling, speak to mamma; tell her you know it was not her fault; tell her you know she thought she was going to die and was only trying to find a home for all of you. My darling, mamma cannot last long anyway, and if I should and you stayed with me you would always be poor, but if you go and live with your uncle, you will almost have a father. He will send you to school, and you will be a smart man some day. Speak to mother, my angel boy.”

The child had made several attempts to speak, but his little heart was too full, and he looked down to the floor with the agony of first sorrow depicted on his countenance. At last his sweet little quivering voice whispered: “Whatever mamma does is right; cause my dear, sweet mamma couldn’t do anything wrong.”

“Oh, thank you, my precious boy, mother wouldn’t take anything for those words, my darling. I will write to you every week, my jewel, when you are gone, and will knit pretty socks, and when you wear them you will think of mamma—won’t you, my boy? Mamma will pray for her little boy each day, and I know your uncle will let you come to see me sometimes, my darling.”

“Yes, my sweet mamma, I hope. Let me go now,

dear mamma and tell my poor doggy Vinco; he will be so sorry."

The child wished to get by himself and cry, as he knew if his mother saw him weep, it would only make her worse. So he ran to Vinco who was lying at the foot of the steps. "Come, Vinco, come." Then child and dog went to the playhouse, and Ullugh told Vinco all of his troubles, and putting his head on his pet, sobbed himself to sleep. The poor dog moaned in sympathy for his little master, and seemed glad when he fell asleep. Mrs. Waldo busied herself with packing her darling's trunk. Oh, mother, God grant that you may never have this task to perform. It was like getting her little boy's shroud. The little trunk was slowly but surely packed, and not a garment was folded that did not contain a mother's tear. Some homemade candy, tea cakes, his favorite playthings, and whatever would be appreciated by a little boy were packed away, until at last the sad task was completed. God alone gave this bereaved mother strength to finish it. It was now dusk, and Mrs. Waldo called her darling boy to prepare him for bed. After the little fellow had put on his night robe, he knelt at his mother's knees, and with her hands resting gently on his head said his little evening prayer.

"Now kiss me good-night, my sweet mamma, and come and lie down and sing me to sleep as you always do; please mamma."

"Sing?" thought the mother. "Sing? when my heart is breaking? But yes, I can do even this, as it may be his last request."

"What shall I sing, my angel?"

"Sing 'Good-by to My Dear Old Southern Home,' and 'Mother Kissed Me in My Dreams,'—sing, please, my sweet mamma." The songs were sung with a

bursting heart, yet with the melody of a mother's evening song. The child was soon wrapped in slumbers, and his mother turned and truly kissed him in his dreams. Ullugh rested quietly that night, but what of the mother? It is useless to say she did not sleep, but kept watch all night long over the slumbering form of her—was he hers? no he was hers no longer—baby boy. O God, look in mercy and bring comfort to a poor lonely mother and fatherless boy.

The next morning, sure enough, a servant from Mr. Deely's came for Ullugh. It is too sad to dwell on the parting of Mrs. Waldo and her son. The mother, taking the hand of her little darling, led him into her room, closed and locked the door. Too sacred is this moment; we will not enter, but leave them with their God.

After a few minutes Ullugh came out alone, his face sad and to all appearances three years older than yesterday, but not one tear did he shed. His heart was too crushed for tears. He then went back to his mother, who was still kneeling, and imprinted a kiss on her white lips. "My sweet mamma, be happy. I won't forget you, and will love you when I am gone and can't see you." Kissing his mother, the darling boy went to the door, yet he came back again. "Oh, my darling, precious mamma, how can I leave you! but the man is calling me, and I must go. Good-by, good-by for the last time my sweet, sweet mamma"—another long, loving kiss, and the mother's darling angel was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

“ I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and nodding violet grows
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine.”

—*Shakespeare.*

CECIL CLAIR was as brave as a lion, yet gentle as a woman; widely read, easy in his bearing, refined, polished, and having just such characteristics as would cause the girls to fall in love with him and vie with each other in trying to entrap him. It was unnecessary that Mrs. Dean should worry about a marriage between Cecil and her sister, for Leita was just the girl for him—sweet and trusting. Cecil had gone the rounds of society and had drunk the cup of pleasure so long that he was only too glad to plunge into the new and untried; hence he was not long in wooing Leita's love. The day of marriage was fixed and preparations for a grand wedding were in progress; the usual bustle and stir made the days go quickly by to all in the house except Myrtle. It was a grand thing for her that Mrs. Dean was so occupied in her efforts to make the event one of splendor and elegance, for by this means she was neglected, and did not get so many whippings. She spent her time amusing herself as she pleased. Eating her breakfast in the morning she would take from the table a biscuit, put it in her pocket, go to the cistern shed, kiss her kitties good-by, get her bonnet, and go no one cared where. She first went to the peach orchard

and filled her bonnet full of fruit, and then over the fence picking blackberries from the corners. Thence she followed a footpath which led her to an old lime sink. Picture to yourself a small lake, with banks sloping gently to the clear blue water's edge, slippery with the pine-needles, blown from tall, waving trees—a mirrored basin sunk deep in the midst of the forest, filled with crystal tears, which no sunny rays could kiss away. Then hear the “Bob-white” of the partridge, the bleating of the sheep, and the far-off tingling of the cow-bell, and you have a faint idea of the sweet retreat to which Myrtle was in the habit of going in her rambles through the woods. By and by, she got her fishing line from its hiding place; secured some worms from a decaying log and began trying her luck fishing. First one perch, then another, and so on until she had caught quite a string of them. Very gently did she take the hook from their mouths, giving words of comfort to her aquatic friends. Becoming tired of this sport, she at last put down her line, and lying on the grass looked up through the trees to the far-away skies. “I wonder if that white cloud is God, the next biggest one Jesus, and all those little ones his angels. I wonder if I will ever get to heaven. Oh! to be where Jesus is! to be where some one will love me! I know they say Jesus loves me, but I want to be right where he is, so I can put my head on his breast and feel his hands on my head, and to hear him say: ‘Myrtle, poor little child, you have never had any one to love you, but you have come now to where everything is love, and I love you!’ Oh, it seems to me that if I had somebody to love me, I would be so happy.” Then Myrtle heard the birds in the treetops singing to their mates; she listened a moment and then she too chimed with the birds.

“Sing, sweet bird, and chase my sorrow,
Let me listen to thy strain,
From thy warblings I can borrow
That which bids me hope again.

“Sing, sweet bird, sing, sweet bird,
Let me listen to thy strain.
Ah! sing, sweet bird,
Let me listen to thy strain.”

Cecil Clair, who was riding through the woods at this time on his fine black horse, heard the sweet, melodious voice, and stopping wondered what it could mean.

“I must be dreaming. Has an angel taken up its abode on earth? Is it human? Yes, and it sounds like a child’s voice, but what child can sing with so much soul and with such sweetness?” Jumping lightly from his horse, and tying him to an overhanging bough, Cecil crept softly in the direction of the sweet music, and there he saw Myrtle lying on the bank. She did not see him as he was completely hid by the boughs of the underbrush. The song had been finished, and Myrtle was softly humming. Intently her large eyes peered into the distance as if two anxious souls were looking and awaiting for something they knew they would never possess. One of the large boughs cracked under Cecil’s foot, and frightened the child so as to cause her to jump up and scream. “Don’t be frightened, little one, your friend is near you.” In a moment, Cecil was by Myrtle’s side. She gave him one of those shy, honest looks, but said nothing.

“Come and sit by me, Myrtle. I want to talk to you. I heard you singing just now, and do you know, you have a voice like an angel. Where did you hear that song?” Myrtle looked around to see if any one was

near, and then clasping her little hands together, she fell at his feet and begged him not to tell on her. "Tell what, my child?"

"Why, that you heard me sing. Oh! brother Cecil, promise me that you will never tell any one; will you?"

"Yes, provided you will come out here in the woods and sing to me whenever I ask you; and further—listen child, that when I am come to die, you will sing me into my eternal sleep. What do you think of that, little shy one?" She looked up into his face and met his eager gaze, but quickly did he close his eyes to conceal the innermost thoughts of his soul. Myrtle's face wore a troubled look. Cecil knew she was timid, but he would hear that voice again, by what means he knew not. "Don't look that way, my child; brighten up, and tell me where you heard that song."

"Brother Cecil, is that a song? I would come out here in the woods and hear the little birds sing, and I would ask them to sing to me. At first they would fly away, but now they do not mind me, and we just sing together until I get tired and go to sleep. I dream, oh such pretty dreams. I wish I could always live here with the birds and fishes; I would be so happy."

"Oh, that she was older," thought Cecil. I wish I were not going to be married next month, but she is only a baby yet.

"What would I do for a little girl, if you were to live here all the time?"

Her eyes sought his in a questioning gaze, and a dark frown came over her face. Wheeling as if to go, her feet slipped on the pine-needles, and in another moment poor little Myrtle was struggling in the old lime sink.

CHAPTER XII.

“ Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn.”

—*Goldsmith.*

ULHUGH on leaving home seemed to carry with him all the little remaining strength his mother possessed, for the sick woman sank heavily to the floor, and Aunt Finn came in hastily and prepared her for bed, where she lay unconscious many hours. At length she grew better, and some days would sit in her armchair by the fire, but it always made her worse, and she was compelled to take her bed the next day. Aunt Finn was ever faithful to her mistress, and seemed to anticipate and supply her wants. At times, the neighbors would drop in to see the sick woman, but very seldom, as they had their own duties to perform. And it was best that it was so, for Mrs. Waldo was too weak to talk, and furthermore, she shrank from seeing any one. The neighbors soon found this out, and Mrs. Waldo was left almost alone. She busied herself, however, in writing to, and knitting socks for Ulhugh. She had tasked herself to do a certain amount of knitting per day, and it was this task alone that kept her from losing her mind.

But what of little Ulhugh and the other children? Three years have passed since Ulhugh bade his mother good-by. The child was put to the plow when he could scarcely reach the handles, and was compelled to be up and in the fields by the time it was light; and

when his day's task was finished, and after feeding his mule, often did he sink to sleep from pure exhaustion in the hay loft and did not wake until morning. In winter he was cold and suffered from frost-bitten feet and hands; in summer he barely escaped sunstrokes. One morning as he came down from his attic Mr. Deely met him in the hall: "Ulugh, go and catch that mule down in the pasture."

Ulugh, knowing how vicious the mule was, hesitated a moment. "Uncle, I am afraid he will kick me."

"Go and catch that mule," roared Mr. Deely, stamping his foot in rage; "who cares if he does kick you?"

"Oh," thought Ulugh, "you are a father indeed! Well are you keeping your promise." And without further delay the boy went to the pasture just beyond the lot, and tried to carry out his uncle's instructions. He gave the mule a good chase, and by and by the mule allowed him to approach nearer. Ulugh, exultant over his success, was about to grab him by the ear, when the mule wheeled suddenly and kicked him, knocking him senseless to the ground.

Mr. Deely, sitting near a window, saw the whole procedure, and when the field hands ran and picked up the unconscious boy and brought him to the house, Mr. Deely grew very uneasy.

"What if the child should die? I would lose a splendid investment, for he is smart, and saves me considerable expense; then again, I might be arrested for ill-treatment." No word of sympathy did he utter, and his excitement was caused by fear of losing a good hand, and of being arrested. During Ulugh's illness in his delirious state he often spoke of his mother, consequently the doctor thought it best to send for Mrs. Waldo. and held a consultation to that effect.

While the doctors were waiting Ulhugh's mother at Mr. Deely's, a bride and groom were asking permission to remain over night at Mrs. Waldo's. The preacher had been necessarily detained, which made it too late for the young couple to arrive at their destination that night. The modest child-bride came into Mrs. Waldo's room. She sat with her head down. The groom went to look after his horse, and Mrs. Waldo and her daughter—for it was no other than sweet Maud—were left alone. As soon as the girl spoke, Mrs. Waldo knew it was her child, but should she make herself known? Had not the girl thought her dead for years? Should she cloud her daughter's bridal day? No, she could not. She would live but a few more days at best, so why tear open the healed wound? She knew how to suffer, but her darling daughter, let her be happy.

"My dear, are you not quite young to marry?"

"Yes, ma'am, I am young, but it could not be helped. Things could not be worse than they have been. I once had a happy home, but it has been so long that I have almost forgotten." (Maud had not asked where she was, and the groom was so thankful for having even a humble cottage for his bride to rest in that he was too happy to quiz any one.) "My dear father was killed in the war, and my mother, I am told, signed away her children on her dying bed, thinking they would be well cared for. While she was dying we were carried off, and I know not even the spot where she lies buried. Oh, that I might kiss the sod and moisten her grave with my tears."

The young girl brushed away the fast-gathering tears from her eyes. "Thank God, mother is at rest, and knows not of the hardships through which her children are passing. My eldest brother Edward fled from the cruelty of his uncle and went to sea. I have one sister

in Europe and one brother in Philadelphia; but I do not know the address of either. I had a dear little afflicted brother Ernest who suffered, oh, so much. How tenderly my dear mother must have watched him; yet, he too was torn from her, and though sick and frail he was made to work as if hale and hardy. Last week he died, and never shall I forget his last dying words: 'Mother, dear mother, are you waiting for your poor sick boy, to rest his tired little head on your sweet breast just as I used to do. Mother, I am so tired, but I soon shall rest. Mother—' he tried to say more, but he was dead, yes, gone to be with mother and father. Thank God there is rest for the weary. I also had a little baby brother, but I guess he is dead too, for I have never heard anything of him. Forgive me, kind lady, that I should have told you these things, but sometimes my mind gets burdened and it is all I can do to restrain myself. Will you not kiss me to-night and give me a mother's blessing? Oh! for a mother's hand to be upon my head to-night and could I hear once more her voice, which I am told was so sweet, whispering 'My darling.' May I not kneel at your bedside and receive your benediction? Can you not imagine you are my mother and I your child? I am so sad to-night, when I should be so happy."

The sweet voice was hushed; the head was bowed, and the poor sick woman placed her hands on the golden locks of the child-bride. The mother's pathetic voice grew tender: "Oh, Father, wilt thou not bless this dear, sweet girl? May she never know what it is to suffer as did her dear mother. May she be a blessing to the world, bringing sunshine and happiness to all about her; make her a true, loving wife; and above all, dear Father, consecrate her to Thy service; take her as Thy child, and may she love thee more and more until

father, mother, sisters and brothers shall meet with Thee in one unbroken circle in Thy beautiful home above; and Thine shall be the glory—Amen.” The mother then imprinted a fervent kiss upon the child’s fair brow.

“Thank you, kind lady, I hear my husband calling me—good-night; I will not disturb you in the morning, as we leave at daybreak for my husband’s home.”

CHAPTER XIII.

"All went merry as a marriage bell."

—*Byron.*

AFTER rescuing Myrtle from a watery grave, imagine if you can the horrible feelings that came over Cecil as she lay there upon the bank to all appearances dead. As he bent to kiss her pale face, a sigh escaped her lips, her eyes opened, and Cecil's heart bounded for joy. Never before had he been so happy.

"Myrtle, darling, I am so glad you have recovered. Do you know, little one, I could never have lived had you been taken from me. Will you not love me just a little now that I have saved you? Are you not glad?"

"I thank you, brother Cecil, for your kindness, but oh, that you had left me to remain where I was. My life is so sad that I would rather die than live."

"Do not be troubled, little one. I am to marry next month and I shall ask your mother to give you to me, and we shall live in the same house, and you shall not get any more whippings then. How would you like that, my pet? I am rich, and would make you so happy."

"To be rich would not make me happy, brother Cecil."

"What then would bring you joy, if not wealth?"

"My mother's and father's love."

"Why would not my love make you happy, my little one? Do you not know that I love you better than anything in the world?" He took the child in his

arms as he spoke, and showered kisses upon her white face.

“Oh, brother Cecil—” the child was becoming frightened, “don’t, please don’t.”

“Don’t what, my little one? I only kissed you. You said you wished for love, and you will always have love from Cecil, my darling.”

The 6th of May, 18—, was the date fixed for Cecil’s marriage, and guests from afar had been invited to come and celebrate the occasion. Mrs. Dean thought it unnecessary to have Myrtle seen, although her sister (one year older) was to be dressed in the finest silk and laces. Before the occasion Mrs. Dean said to Myrtle: “Myrtle, if you dare let any of my guests see you, I will whip you for a week. You have no dress to wear, and I am glad of it. If I had my way about it you should never have any.”

“Yes, mother, I will mind you,” said the poor little forsaken child.

“Oh, I know you will. I would only be too glad if you would not, so I could have an excuse to punish you.” The haughty woman looked at the poor little thing with hatred and disgust; Myrtle only hung her head and left the room. At the appointed time the Dean mansion was beautifully decorated with palms and ferns and the sweet perfume rising from the rose, lily, and jessamine filled the air, and caused one to think of a paradise. Japanese lanterns hung around the broad veranda and in the walks; a string band furnished music for the occasion, stopping only as the minister performed the ceremony which made Cecil Clair and Leita Lane man and wife. The gayest of the gay were there, and truly everything went “as merry as a marriage bell.” The guests promenaded, laughed, talked love, for who could resist Cupid as everything bespoke love.

But where was little Myrtle while every one was enjoying the festivities of the occasion? Far away from the light of the lanterns, under the starlit sky. Where none could see her, she had stolen to where she had herself planted a little garden. Her rose bush was covered with white blossoms—for it was the bridal rose that was in full bloom. “Mamma will not give me a dress, but God is good to me and has given me these beautiful flowers, and I shall make me a dress of roses and jessamines, and God and his angels will see it and think it a pretty one; and that big oak with a hollow in it shall be my home, and I will have pretty vines running all over it and pretty flowers around it.” Then the child hung the vines about her shoulders and placed some white roses in her hair—making a striking contrast to her dark tresses. “Well, I am fixed to go to my little home. I am so tired, I want to lie down and rest.” The little darling went over to her house, and was soon wrapt in slumber.

“Here recline you, gentle maid,
Sweet in this embowering shade ;
Sweet the young, the modest tree,
Ruffled by the kissing breeze ;
Sweet the little founts that weep,
Lulling soft the maid to sleep.

Cecil Clair had introduced his fair bride to some of his chums, so leaving them to entertain her he went out in the cool yard. He walked on, not caring where he went, till presently he was standing in front of the old tree in which Myrtle rested. As the child slept, the moon shone directly on her fair calm face. One hand was filled with jessamines and the other pressed a pure white rose to her heart. As he gazed at the sleeping beauty, Cecil murmured: “Oh, that I had the child’s picture, oh, for a Raphael to—

“Paint her pretty ringlets playing;
Silky locks, like tendrils straying;
And, if painting hath the skill
To make the spicy balm distill,
Let every little lock exhale
A sigh of perfume on the gale
Where her tresses curly flow,
Sparkles o’er the brow of snow.
Let her forehead beam the light,
Burnished as the ivory bright.
Let the eyebrows smoothly rise,
In jetty arches o’er her eyes,
Each a crescent gently gliding,
Just commingling, just dividing.”

“She seems like an angel; yet, it is my sweet little Myrtle, and what have we here—sweet jessamines and white roses—bridal roses too? What can the poor little thing mean.” Cecil—could he tell why? then sat down by the sleeping form; and what passes through his mind we will let pass. At last he stooped and kissed the child. She was startled and would have screamed had she not then heard that low musical voice so familiar to her. “Myrtle, little one, do not be alarmed; it is Cecil. Why are you here?” She only hung her head, and Cecil continued: “Will you not speak, my child? will you never allow me to be your friend? But I know why. It is some of your mother’s plans. Poor woman, I never saw any one who could think of as many mean things. But do not cry, my pet, I am almost selfish enough to say I am glad, for never have I seen such a sweet picture before.” As he spoke the little head was drawn close to his bosom; he stroked her hair gently, and as he did so a thorn in the bridal rose in her hair pricked his hand. Was it an ill omen?

Cecil had forgotten he had been married but a few hours ago. “What brought this child across my path

to-night? Strange, passing strange, she fascinates me; yes, more than I like. I am glad she is a child—because—because—I am—am—married.”

For the first time Cecil thought of his wife, and then he hurriedly kissed the child. “Go into the house, little one, you will catch cold out here. Be happy, I love you.” In another moment, Cecil was with his wife. The child of the “Ides” was left alone and forsaken.

CHAPTER XIV.

“Never morning wore to evening,
But some heart did break.”

—*Tennyson.*

SOON after the bride had left Mrs. Waldo's room a message was received from Mr. Deely. The doctors had decided to send for Ulhugh's mother, and Mr. Deely carrying out their instructions, hastened his servant with a note to Mrs. Waldo. “Your son is very sick, but if you come immediately his life may yet be saved. I send my carriage for you, and as the nights are very pleasant, you had better come at once. Prove your love for your child by making an effort to respond at once.”

Such a message would cause a mother to go though dying. Although Mrs. Waldo had been confined to her bed for months, she felt new life come to her when she realized she could see her baby boy.

“What if it should kill me; it would only be a few days sooner entering upon my eternal rest? Aunt Finn, dress me immediately, for I am going to see my baby boy, who, I am afraid, is dying. Oh! I would willingly die could I see him once more.”

“Lor, Misses, you ain't able to go. Please stay at home.”

“No, Aunt Finn, dress me. I must go, and you must go with me. You have always been near me, and I cannot now do without you. I was glad you

were not here this evening. I will tell you all another time."

Aunt Finn had gotten a negro girl to do her work around the house that day and had gone to town on business for Mrs. Waldo; consequently did not know of the bride's arrival. "Aunt Finn, when you die God will certainly give you a crown of glory. All of these long years since my poor husband died you have nursed and cared for me. I will only be here a short while now, and as I might never have another opportunity to thank you, I do so now. God has all of the good you have done for me written in His book. He is generous in his rewards. How thankful I am that there is a God who gives justice to all. You have never forgotten me; neither will God forget you, and may the blessings of a poor sick woman ever go with you."

"Don't speak of it, Misses. I only thank the good Lord dat I is ben able to repay you a little for the good you and Mosser has done me all of my life." By this time Mrs. Waldo was dressed, and after pillows had been put in the carriage to make it as comfortable as possible, she walked with the assistance of Aunt Finn to the carriage. As Aunt Finn and Mrs. Waldo started off, Vinco—Ulugh's pet—began to whine. This at once aroused Aunt Finn's superstition. "For de Lord's sake, dog, do stop dat. I'se neber heard you do dat way sepin trouble wus a-comin'."

Mrs. Waldo smiled sadly upon the old nurse. "Oh! do not say that, Aunt Finn, but let us hope for the best." After traveling some miles, Mrs. Waldo became tired, and asked the driver to stop at the next dwelling and let her get some water. The driver did as requested, and Mrs. Waldo spoke to a boy who was leaning on the gate: "My little boy, will you not bring me a dipper of water?"

“With pleasure, ma’am.” Running into the house, he got a dipper of cool water, returned, took off his hat politely and handed it to Mrs. Waldo. A large torch was burning in the yard so as to attract the mosquitoes and candle-flies and thus draw them from the house; by the light of this the sick woman was enabled to see plainly the face of the child. She looked at him searchingly, and when she had finished drinking she handed him the dipper:

“I thank you, my child. Excuse me, but why are you up so late to-night?”

“Well, ma’am, we are just from Philadelphia; my father is not well, and I am staying up to give him medicine. We just came down on a little business; mother did not come. So I am acting nurse.”

“What is your name, my lad?”

“Raymond Felix, ma’am, but please excuse me, I hear father’s bell.”

“Certainly, my child; a widow’s blessing and love be with you.”

He tipped his hat, and was gone—the carriage rolled on.

“My boy! My boy! You will never see mother again. God bless and keep you happy. Once I was happy too, but it has been so long ago that I sometimes think I must have been dreaming. But soon—yes, very soon, my troubles will cease. Oh, my God, help me to wait; be patient and submissive.” She was so fatigued that she felt she would be compelled to lie down for a few moments, so the driver was told to stop at the next house, where Mrs. Waldo was received graciously, and no time was lost in making her as comfortable as possible. In the room to which she was shown were two beds, one being occupied by a beautiful little girl. Though ’twas midnight the child was awake and very

talkative. "Oh! I thought you were my dear mamma. Mamma said she was going to see a dear friend of hers—Mrs. Waldo—whom she thought had died many years ago. But we heard over in Europe that she was alive, and mamma would not be satisfied until father brought her to America to see her. Then mamma said: 'Edith, if it be true that Mrs. Waldo still lives, she will love you and you will love her so much that you will want to leave me and live with her, and it would almost kill me to give you up;' then she cried and hugged and kissed me until I was almost smothered. Father does not kiss me much, but I know he loves me for he gives me everything I wish. Oh! I have such funny dreams about kissing, and I don't know what to make of it. I often dream that I have another father who loves to kiss me, and he is oh, so handsome; and I dream I have a poor beautiful sick mother, from whom I was taken; and also a poor little invalid brother; and other brothers and sisters. When I wake I find it all a dream; but I dream the same thing over and over, and I can't understand it. I tell mother and she cries so hard that I have to stop for fear it will make her sick. Oh, dear, I wish mamma would come home so I could go to sleep."

"Come and kiss me, my child; and if you do not object, I will sing you to sleep."

"Oh, I would love to kiss you. You have such a sweet face, but it looks so sad that I feel sorry for you."

The child kissed Mrs. Waldo, and returned to her bed. "Sing me a song you used to sing to your little girl—if you ever had one."

Mrs. Waldo, brushing the tears from her eyes, sang softly a sweet, plaintive lullaby—

“ Birds in the night that softly call,
Winds in the night that strangely sigh,
Come to me, help me one and all,
And murmur, murmur, murmur, murmur baby’s lullaby—
Lullaby, lullaby, lullaby.
While the hours run,
Fair may the day be,
When night is done,
Life may be sad for us that wake ;
Sleep little bird and dream not why,
Soon is the sleep, but God can break.
When Angels whisper, whisper,
Angels whisper lullaby,
Lullaby, lullaby, lul-la lul-la lulla lulla lullaby
Lullaby baby, still the hours run.
Fair may the day be, when the night is done.
Lullaby, baby, while the hours run,
Lullaby, lullaby, lullaby, lullaby.”

It was the first lullaby Viola had sung since that last night with her baby boy. When she had finished, Edith opened wide her blue eyes. “Oh! isn’t it strange! That is the very song I hear my mother sing when I am dreaming. Oh, it is so sweet. Please sing it over again, and I will go to sleep.”

The mother repeated the lullaby, but ere she had ended the first verse the child’s dark lashes fell over her deep blue eyes, and little Edith was fast asleep. Mrs. Waldo sank beside the child’s bed and prayed: “Master, strength, strength—it will soon be over.” She arose, kissed the child, then once again for her father up in heaven who loved her so much. This was his little pet and mischief-maker. The child smiled in her sleep, and Mrs. Waldo turned to go. Oh, how often do parents suffer and bear burdens while the children are light-hearted. But, Gracious Father, let the little ones be happy while they can, for soon—ah, too

soon, will sorrow come to their young hearts. After returning to the carriage, the poor sick woman pondered in her mind: "What does it all mean? Surely there is some special providence connected with the happenings of to-night."

The carriage rumbled on and on, but Mrs. Waldo's thoughts were of the past. It was a beautiful night. The moon was full and shone brightly. At a turn of the road, her attention was drawn to an old churchyard. She glanced hurriedly from one tombstone to another until her eyes rested on a newly made grave. "Oh! there is where my poor little afflicted child lies. No one has told me, but I just feel it. Stop, stop, I cannot pass my Ernest's grave. Yet he needed me most in life. In death he needs me not. Driver go on a piece, and then come back for me in a few minutes. God alone must see my sorrow."

The poor woman went over to the newly made grave, and as she approached a fresh white rose which had just been placed there caught her eye. "Thank God for one feeling heart. My God! My God! is this my Gethsemane? Pity me, Father. Has my poor afflicted Ernest suffered all these years without one kiss from his mother? and now that I would press him to my bosom this cold clay hides him from my embrace. Oh, grave! give me back my precious child, and let him know once more a mother's love. Come, my child! Mother will have you even in death; and the poor frenzied woman began digging the cold clay with her hands. So great was her grief that she seemed for a moment to have lost her mind, and did not notice a tall youth, who was standing by her side. She started to her feet, but he spoke in a voice calculated to calm the grief-stricken woman:

"My dear lady, you are mistaken, this is not your

child. His mother died many years ago and I am his eldest brother. I had hoped to relieve his suffering, but alas! too late! too late! I found only his little mound! I could not sleep to-night, so I came here and placed this white rose on his grave. It is a very small thing, but it is enough to show a brother's love. I am heart-broken, and I go, I know not where. Since the cruel war, in which my father, Ulhugh Waldo, fell in battle, and my dear mother's death, I have felt that life was not worth the living."

"Am I indeed speaking to my first born—my Edward? Oh, my God, it is indeed," and the poor mother threw her arms tightly about her Edward's neck. "I did not die, my child, as you thought; no, I have waited all these years to see once more the faces of my darling children. I wrote to you often, but you never received my letters." And then Mrs. Waldo continued to talk freely with her son, who wept bitterly as he listened to his mother's conversation.

"Dear, dear mother, to think of you having been alive all these long years and I knew it not. But thank God I have found you at last. You shall once more know what it is to have home, love, and comfort."

Edward drew his arms more tightly about his mother's neck and kissed her tenderly, yet the poor woman sighed. "It is too late my boy—too late."

"What do you mean, dear mother? It will never be too late for me to prove my love for you. My father's blood is in my veins, and I would willingly lay down my life for you."

"My son, a mother's love and blessing be ever upon you. Forgive me for making myself known, yet I hope it is all for the best. I go to-night to see your baby brother, Ulhugh, whom I have reason to believe has been cruelly treated by his uncle. Now listen, my boy,

as soon as your brother gets well, I want you to go for him, and take him where his uncle will never see him again. I know you will treat him kindly. Take this," and she pulled from her finger a beautiful diamond ring and handed it to him. "Your father placed it on my hand on my betrothal day, and it has never been removed for a moment. I go to my child, but I am afraid he will be too sick to know me. When he gets well, I may be sleeping here by the side of your little brother. Give my baby boy this ring when he is grown, and tell him to read a mother's love in each sparkling jewel. Tell him I wrote to him each day after he left me and knitted pretty socks, and sent them to him. Tell him how I have longed to see him—as well as all my precious children. May God forgive those who have wronged me and my children. Do not forget Aunt Finn. Remember she helped me when all else deserted me, and may God bless her abundantly. Take courage, my boy, and remember I intrust your baby brother to your care. Good-by, my noble Edward. I hear the carriage coming; I must go. Conceal yourself so that your uncle's driver will not see you. Give me one fond embrace ere I go, my Edward;" and the mother clasped her son to her bosom and murmured a blessing, then stooped and kissed the little mound and was gone.

After they had started on their journey, Mrs. Waldo said to the old nurse: "Aunt Finn, I have seen all of my children now, except my baby, and I shall soon see him. God has been good to me, and has allowed me to see them all before I die."

"Misses," and Aunt Finn sighed deeply, "you are sick. It is too bad. You ain't seed none of your chillun."

"Yes, Aunt Finn, I have. I am too sick to tell you all now, but you will find out that what I say is true."

"Poor thing," thought Aunt Finn, "Let her have her own way she is so sick and don't know what she says."

Mrs. Waldo felt as if she would never live to see her baby boy, and she prayed that God would spare her. So devoutly was she praying that she was oblivious of all her surroundings. Later on, looking out of the window, she saw that she would have only half a mile more to travel before she would be with her boy. Her heart beat loud and fast, and she pictured to herself her darling boy running down the big road to meet her, with his bright face, his beaming eyes, his pretty auburn curls floating about his pure lovely face; how he would hug and kiss and squeeze her around the neck as he cried for joy. Oh! my sweet mamma, have you come at last? I am so glad to see my sweet, sweet mamma—Mrs. Waldo's meditations were interrupted by the carriage stopping; on looking from the window the sick woman saw she was in front of Mr. Deely's house. "Aunt Finn, please help me to get out." A light was burning dim on the first floor. As Mrs. Waldo went up the steps, she was met by one of the doctors. "This is the little boy's mother, I presume. I am glad, madam, you have come; we are trying to hope for the best. Walk in this way, but please calm yourself, and do not give way to your feelings, for you will make the little boy worse."

"Thank you, doctor, I will not disturb my darling. I only ask to see my precious boy once more in life. Many years have I studied endurance, doctor, fortitude will not fail me now when it is most needed."

The doctor led the way to the sick chamber, followed by Mrs. Waldo and Aunt Finn. The room was furnished with plain mahogany furniture. In one of the large armchairs sat Mr. Deely fast asleep.

Sitting around in groups were some neighbors, who had come to sit up with the child, but were busy gossiping; and had you listened carefully you might have caught their conversation even if it was spoken in a whisper: "It will go hard with Deely if the child should die. It is strange his mother should have given him up. Catch me giving up my children for other folks to beat and cuff around."

Mrs. Waldo came in about this time, heard the gossiping women, yet so intent was she on seeing her baby boy she seemed not to observe them. The mother drew near the bed, and by the light of the dimly burning candle saw her precious child. His dear little face was twice its natural size; and as Mrs. Waldo gazed on the sleeping form, her face twitched, and she asked herself "surely is this my beautiful little boy who was carried away from his mamma? and could you have seen that poor mother's face, with the anguish of former years and present grief painted upon it, the sight would have caused you to grow sick at heart. But gradually the cloud passed away and a radiance settled upon the mother's sweet face, causing all in the room to arise to their feet and stand still as if struck with awe. The mother stooped and imprinted a kiss upon the bandaged forehead of her little boy, and as she did so the little fellow moved, and in his delirium sang sweetly one line of the last song his mother had sung to him—"Mother Kissed Me in My Dreams."

Mrs. Waldo knelt beside the bed of her precious boy, and took his dear little hand in hers. The mother then bowed her head as if in prayer. The room was deathly silent and naught could be heard save the ticking of the old clock on the mantel. The candle flickered for a moment, then went out—Viola Waldo was dead.

CHAPTER XV.

“ Ah, Christ that it was possible,
For one short hour to see
The souls we love, that they might tell us
What and where they be.”

—*Tennyson.*

MRS. WALDO was buried beside the little grave she had wept over so bitterly a few nights since. All of her children, excepting her youngest boy, were present at her funeral, but only one of them knew a mother was being laid to rest. Edward, the eldest son—a tall, handsome youth, stood apart from the sad crowd. His hat was pulled down over his face, as if to shade it from the evening sun, but in reality he wished to conceal his features from those about him. “Merciful Father, to think I might have been with my precious mother for all these years, and yet did not know she lived! How she must have longed to see her children. She has indeed died of grief. Yet if it be too late to help my dear mother, I will carry out her dying request—to take care of little brother Ulhugh.”

Shovel after shovel of damp clay fell with a sickening thud upon the coffin of the dead woman. The bridal couple that had spent the night at Mrs. Waldo's were now taking a drive for pleasure and pastime, but they were prevented from going on their way by the vehicles of the funeral procession. As the bride waited, she saw an old negro standing near by. “Old man, will you please tell me who it is that is dead?”

"I am sorry Missis, but I can't call de name. She don't lib here. I hear say she bin sick a long time, and dat she wus a mighty good woman—de Lord be praised, her soul is gone to glory."

"Thank you, old man."

Then the young bride turned to her husband. "Can't we possibly get by; every one is staring at me—this bright dress and gay plumes are not very appropriate for a funeral." And thus sweet Maud passed by her mother's grave. Ah, facts, stern, sad facts, how often in this life of ours they become stranger than idle fiction!

The grave having been filled with the damp earth, was now shaped into a low mound, and a wooden slab marked the head of the peaceful sleeper.

"Mamma," whispered Edith DeLong, "I feel so sorry for this poor woman, may I put these flowers on her grave?"

"Yes, my darling, it will more than please me, for this sweet woman was the best friend I had when I was a little girl at school."

"My boy," said Mr. Felix to Raymond, "take these flowers and go and place them on the grave of one of the best women that ever lived in this sorrowful world." Strange and sad, Raymond Felix and Edith DeLong bent and scattered flowers over the dark sod, but knew not it was their mother's grave. Unconsciously the two gazed at each other. It was only for a second—yet ever after would the handsome boy remember the dark violet orbs of that sweet little girl. What made Edith and Raymond sigh deeply when they both turned to leave the newly made grave? "Oh, those beautiful children," murmured several in the crowd, "I wonder who they can be, they look like brother and sister." The sun was dipping low in the west, and all who

attended the funeral had returned to their several homes save one true soul. Old Aunt Finn with the tears streaming from her honest eyes stood by the grave of her mistress. "Oh, Misses, is you gone and lef me, but I would not call you back to dis world of sin and trouble, but me do thank de Lord dat you is gone to rest in de bosom of de Lord—for oh, Missis, you do needs rest, rest. I loves you Misses and dats why I want to see you happy. It did most kill me to see you suffer, but it is all ended now—oh, thank de Lord you is in glory. No more pain can come to you, thank de Lord. You is in glory, and I'se gwine to strive to meet you dar, thank de Lord you is in glory." The old woman repeated these words with a monotonous moan, turning her head from side to side to keep time with the melancholy dirge, and ever and anon her checked homespun apron went to her eyes to wipe away the big tears that coursed down her furrowed face.

"My good old woman," and Edward Waldo drew near to Aunt Finn, "I know who you are, mother told me here a few nights ago how kind you had been to her. I thank you for all you have done, and God will abundantly bless you. Do you not know me, Aunt Finn? I am Edward, your mistress' eldest son."

"Is you Marse Edward?" and the old woman gazed intently into the lad's face. "De Lord be praised, I surely tink you is."

"Aunt Finn, listen to what I have to say," continued Edward. "My poor mother is dead! At last she rests in peace. Had I known she lived, I would gladly have given my life for her happiness, but alas, she does not need my aid now. If, however, I cannot work for mother, I will help one whom she wished me to protect. I speak of my baby brother, Ulhugh. To you,

Aunt Finn, am I looking for help in gaining possession of my little brother. The child knows you, and loves you, and will do what you request of him. My mother's last words were to take and protect my brother from the man who so falsely broke his oath."

"I do see, Marse Edward, you shall hab dat child soon as he is well enough. Over Misses grave, I do tell you I'se gwine to do all I can for ebery child of hers; bless her pure soul."

"I trust you, Aunt Finn. To-morrow meet me at the big tree where the roads cross, and let me know more of my little brother."

It was growing late, the stars were coming out one by one, flecking the heavens with their beauteous glory. Yet the old woman and lad lingered about the lonely grave. "I must pray, Marse Edward. When I'se burdened, I does pray." And in another moment the dear old soul sank on her knees beside her mistress' grave. Never in after years did Edward Waldo forget Aunt Finn's prayer. It is impossible to repeat it here, for who could paint those broken sobs that did accompany each word so full of pathos and sorrow.

"I can go now, Marse Edward, de Lord will sustain me. 'I called upon Him in my distress, and He heard me.'"

"Yes, Aunt Finn, your prayer has helped me also. The Lord that has ever been with you, the Lord that my mother trusted, her son will also trust," and as the old woman and youth talked they walked slowly and sadly away from that lonely grave.

CHAPTER XVI.

“A Heaven on earth.”

—*Milton.*

It is not necessary to speak of the difficulties that seemed to beset Edward Waldo as he tried to gain possession of his little brother Ulhugh. Through much perseverance and with the help of faithful Aunt Finn, Ulhugh was eventually enfolded in his big brother's arms. Very tenderly did the older brother tell the younger of dear mother's death.

“It is very sad, little brother, but as sweet mother suffered so much on earth, let us be glad that she can rest in heaven—where there is no more pain nor sickness. I will be good and kind to you, little brother, and never shall you want for anything while I live.” Edward bent and kissed the child, who had already begun to love his big brother. What of that last sad visit to mother's grave—what feelings came to the mind of the eldest and youngest child? But let it pass—let it pass; life is so full of sadness—will there never be some gladness? must our hearts be ever crushed? ah, let it pass—let it pass. Soon the day will cast out darkness—let it pass, let it pass.”

The two brothers went to the old home to see it once more, and there they told their faithful old nurse good-by. Edward divided the scanty contents of his purse with Aunt Finn, but it was with great difficulty that he succeeded in getting the old soul to accept a penny

from his hands. "We are going to Florida, nurse and just as soon as I make money enough to buy us a little home, we shall come back and take you if you will go with us. Would you not like to cook for us. Come cheer up, nurse, what say you?"

The good old nurse brushed away the big tears as she in a choking voice tried to answer her young master. "Lar, Marse Edward, I would follow you and dat baby dar to de end ob de world. Go, honey, and git settled, and den come back for old black mammy, and de Lord be wid yer, and take care ob yer; and trust Him, my chilun, for He is yer best friend." It was very hard for the two brothers to leave the good old nurse, but they must be turning their eyes toward the land of flowers.

As soon as Edward arrived in Florida, he rented a small room which had been used for packing oranges. "It is a poor home I bring you to, little brother, but it is rich in love, and if you will be patient I will have a big home for you some day." Edward now felt he had something to live for, and his warm heart overflowed with tender sympathy for his lonely brother. How often he would catch the child in his strong arms, throw him on his back and ride him all around the room, at the same time whistling a merry tune to his little charge. Ulhugh tried to prove his happiness to his brother, for his joy was indeed great, yet the child knew not how to be demonstrative; but could you have seen the love in his earnest eyes, you would have read the deep gratitude of the little fellow's soul.

"Why do you look so serious, little brother, are you sorry I stole you from uncle?"

"Oh, no, dear brother, I was only thinking if I could tell you in words how kind you are to me."

"Well, if that is all, little brother, do not try to tell

me. But while we talk let us go and look at this lovely orange grove. Now this grove is about twenty-years old; the trees are seedlings and are much more beautiful than those that are budded. Look, brother! oh, look! as far as your eyes can see, turn them where you will from one beauteous avenue to another, still they behold surpassing loveliness; and the leaves of the many trees so closely caress each other as they are thrown lightly together by the gentle zephyr that you mistake them for the children of one mother trunk. The golden fruit hangs here, and there, and everywhere, as if to say, eat little brother, and be happy; and as the sunlight comes and steals kisses from the oranges they seem to blush beneath his fervent touch and would fain cover their burnished faces under sweet scented blossoms and verdant leaves. See, little brother, the gorgeous butterfly, and hear the low hum of the busy bee, as she flies from flower to flower to sip her favorite sweet. And here is a lake, and there is one, and over yonder is another—look where you will, you find a crystal basin mirroring upon its surface the cerulean sky. Facing us is the high bluff, and below in the far distance is the blue lake, where children play upon its shores in the white sand, and ever and anon dip their little brown feet in the silvery waves, or amuse themselves by building frog houses, catching minnows, and making merry all the day long. And now steals upon us the cooling zephyrs, wafting to our senses the sweet perfume of orange blossoms. Little brother, where are we? I feel we must be in Eden, for I am so happy. Oh, that my pent-up soul might burst forth into poetic song! This must be the land of love, for I could hate no one here; all that have done me harm, I freely forgive.”

Edward and Ulhugh had talked long; the evening

shadows were deepening about them; the blazing sun seemed to have found a resting place at the other end of the lake; the gloaming deepens—by far the sweetest time of all the day, but it passes as all things else must pass; and the stars begin to peep one by one, until the heaven is flecked with their radiant glory; the silvery moon rises slowly, until high in the heavens its shimmering light is thrown o'er placid lake and sweet orange-scented groves. "Hush! hark, little brother, I hear a party of lads and lassies singing, keeping time with the dipping oars."

"'TIS MOONLIGHT ON THE LAKE."

"Come away, come away,
Oh! come where the silv'ry waves break,
Oh! come, oh! come.
There's moonlight on the lake,
There's moonlight on the lake,
The sun has gone to rest,
The birds have call'd their lov'd;
Have call'd their lov'd ones to rest."

"Oh, how rapturous the sound as by gentle winds the sweet strains are wafted to us o'er the rippling waves. But, my little brother, it is time you were in your cozy bed dreaming; let us away from this enchanted spot." Soon the two brothers had gained their sweet retreat. "Ulugh, my boy, give me the sacred Bible that mother loved. Her God shall be our God. Let us read the twenty-third Psalm; now give me your hand, little brother, while we kneel and give thanks to the Lord for all His loving kindness and tender mercies. And now good-night, little brother, holy angels guard thy bed."

As the moon beamed through the window of the small room that night, little Ulugh's head rested peacefully on his big brother's arm. Oh, the love

that dwelleth in the heart of brothers is great indeed, or it would not have been said, "There is one that sticketh closer than a brother."

Oh, Florida, Florida, what of thee? Land of flowers; land of poetry; land of sweet dreams—long may you gladden the hearts of the many thousands who come to thee for rest, sweet rest. Thy children come to thee for labor ended. Tired brains, poring over-books, find forgetfulness in thee. The sick and afflicted, chilled and frozen by Northern climes find in thee a sunny smile. Still modest thou art and retiring; yet many there are who shall rise up and call thee blessed, oh, thou Florida, peaceful land of loveliness!

"If God hath made the world so fair,
Where sin and death abound,
How beautiful beyond compare,
Will paradise be found."

CHAPTER XVI.

“Affliction’s sons are brothers in distress—
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss.”

—*Burns.*

EDWARD was preparing the morning meal, for he had learned to do everything necessary for the comfort of his small household. The little room appeared clean and bright. One glance was sufficient to take in its meager furnishings—a plain pine bed, several wooden chairs, and a small stove that was used for both heating and cooking. The floor had no carpet on it, yet it was spotless. How it could be kept so clean used as a cooking room was indeed a mystery. A small shelf held the most sacred treasure in the room—“Mother’s Bible.” On the widow-sill was a box filled with beautiful bright geraniums, planted and tended by Ulhugh.

Where was the little lad this morning? He had gone to fill a tin can with water—brother Edward not being able to buy a water bucket. Coming in a few minutes later with his little face all aglow he exclaimed excitedly: “Oh, brother Edward, I have some news; guess quick what it is.”

“Well, little brother, as soon as I turn over these nice brown batter-cakes, I will try to think what news you have. It must be something very good, for you look very happy. Well, well, our little village is not much given to gossip. every person seems to go on with his work harming no one, and wishing good to all; let me see—what, what can—it—be?”

“Oh, brother Edward, you take too long to guess, I cannot keep it any longer—why it is this, some big, rich man from another state, I believe his name is Cecil Clair, has bought that beautiful mansion which you know has been closed so long, and has hired servants to clean it up. I hear they have been busy for days, and I do not see why we did not find it out before and what is more, the big, rich man is coming to-day with his pretty young wife and little sister, and it is most time for the train. Let us eat our breakfast in a hurry and go to the train and see if they are coming sure enough, for I want to get a peep at them.”

“Why, little brother, are you excited? These people are like every one else. Why do you wish to see them? Surely not because they are rich; wealth is a great thing, it is true, but better far is a good name backed by honesty, integrity, sobriety, and a spotless character. Yes, these in life are better than money. But if my little brother wishes to go to the train, he shall go, and I believe you have gotten my curiosity aroused so that I too wish to see these persons in whom you are taking so much interest.”

Edward took his little brother and held him high above his head, as was customary when he wished to show special demonstrations of love, but the latter caught his big brother about the neck and was not ashamed to almost smother him with kisses. Oh, joy, joyous day; oh, blissful day. The two brothers hastily ate their scanty meal, and then put the little room in order. “We shall have ample time, if we walk somewhat briskly,” and the brothers went on their way merrily chatting together, until they came to the station. The train was a few minutes late, but this was well, for the two were quite ready to rest a little after their hurried walk. As they waited, they sat on an

old goods box, Edward sitting close to his little brother holding his hand. The train blew shrilly in the distance. Ulhugh unconsciously straightened himself and passing his hand through his wavy locks smoothed them over his fine brow. Edward noticed Ulhugh's movements and smiled. In a moment the train stopped, and as the people crowded forth, Ulhugh leaned forward that he might see better, for he felt he had not as yet caught sight of the right persons. At this moment Cecil stepped from the coach accompanied by his beautiful wife and little Myrtle. Cecil saw the two brothers as he hastily passed by—he generally took in everything; Leita observed nothing, she only followed her husband. Strange as it may appear, Myrtle looked up just as she came in front of Edward and Ulhugh, and the child seemed to stop unconsciously as she cast her dark, sad eyes upon Ulhugh—of course, it was only a coincidence, and lasted not a second, but it was enough to make Ulhugh catch hold of his brother as he drew a deep breath. Yes—

“ Young eyes will meet young eyes,
Young hearts will greet young hearts.”

A short time intervened, and all was quiet at the little way station. Only the brothers had remained; neither had spoken for a long time, each seemed wrapped in his own meditations. At last, Ulhugh broke the silence—“I say, brother, what do you think of them?”

“Well, I do not like to say, little brother, but my opinion of that man is that being exceedingly handsome and immensely wealthy he has been greatly petted and spoiled. He is impulsive, and might some day do that which he would regret all the days of his life. I believe he is good at heart, but if he ever should be

tempted to sin, it would be hard for him to resist. The only thing that would save him would be some one of a stronger character to show him the error of his way; and while his wife is sweet and beautiful, she is not the woman to make a man such as he is happy. But you are a little fellow, I should not talk to you in this way, and I did wrong to form my opinion before becoming personally acquainted with the gentleman, because 'hasty conclusions' are a sin of which we are all more or less guilty."

"Oh, brother Edward, do not, until you have told me about the—the—little—little—girl."

"W—h—e—w! little brother, what do you want to know about her? How do I know, child, I am no fortune-teller. Yet it seems to me you could have looked into her eyes and read all you wished to know."

"I did look at them brother, and they frightened me."

"Frightened you? what was in that sweet face to make you afraid?"

"Brother Edward, her eyes were so pretty; I do not see how they could be natural. I was looking for them to fall out and break, and what a pity that would be. I do not see how such a thin, pale, little girl could have such pretty eyes; and she looked sad too, just like she thought they were going to break."

Edward leaned back and laughed himself almost sick. "My child, those beautiful eyes will never break, but rather some boy's heart will break some day because of their loveliness."

"I say, brother Edward, do you not wish that little girl was our sister; we would make her happy; I wonder if she can laugh? Oh, I would give anything to hear her talk; I do hope she is not dumb."

"Little brother, I am going to get right jealous," and Edward smiled to himself to see how the little

girl's one glance had so impressed the boy, who had never been known before to be enthusiastic over any person.

"Little brother, let us go home now, I want to finish teaching you that piece on the violin; and as you are well and strong once more, books will take the place of toys. How would you like the idea of going to school now, little brother?"

"I would like to go, brother Edward; I think I would love to study."

Hence not many days from this time, Ullugh went regularly to school. He learned fast and was a general favorite with teacher and pupils. Edward worked hard, for his one ambition was to educate his little brother. Toil is sweet when seasoned with love, and Edward looked forward with joy to the evenings when his work was over and Ullugh's lessons learned. The two brothers would sit together and talk of father—whom Ullugh had never seen—and sweet mamma gone home to rest. Then they would speak of the future—how the young revel in "castles in the air!" Oh, let them enjoy this simple pastime. Who would mar the happiness the young find in a world so full of sadness?

The two brothers had learned to sing and play together. The love that each had for the other was the talk of the village. On Sunday Ullugh and Edward could be seen going to church hand in hand, and sitting together on the high benches as they listened with reverence to the word of God, the tall handsome brother ever taking tender care of the little Ullugh. Myrtle and many others watched the brothers with intense interest. She had often seen Ullugh going to school; met him face to face, but never had the children spoken. That same pensive look was ever on Myrtle's face, and

Ulhugh seemed to think her a creature too pure and good for him to approach. Yet it never entered Myrtle's head that any one should give her a thought. Poor child! she was anything but happy. In Cecil's many deeds of kindness there seemed to lurk something which was wholly incomprehensible to her childish mind. Should she not love him very dearly; had he not been the only one in the wide, wide world that had ever given her a kind word? Myrtle knew Cecil had a right to kiss her—it was only brother Cecil, and oh, sweet it was to have some one love her. "Mother will not love me, so I will just let brother Cecil love me." Ah, mothers, it does not take much to steal your daughter's affection, even when you are devoted to them. What must be the consequence when you take no interest in their welfare, and withhold your love from them? When the time came round for Cecil to return home, he had not become acquainted with many persons, as he had never cared to mingle with mankind, but he liked Florida and would come back year after year. He would always bring Myrtle, as she made things more pleasant, and then Leita must have company. The old mansion was closed; the doors locked, and its inmates departed for home. Ulhugh was sorry for he no longer saw the little sad-eyed girl, but was made glad when he heard that she would return each winter with her brother and sister. Oh, how he longed to make her happy. Always when Ulhugh spoke to his brother of Myrtle, he called her the little "sad-eyed" girl, for he did not know Myrtle's name, having never heard it called by any one. Edward encouraged Ulhugh in speaking of Myrtle, for he greatly fancied the little one.

"Little brother, do you not think when you get to be a man you will then win a smile from her? ah, I know you will."

The two brothers grew into each other's affection until their love had become boundless. Oh, the joy and bliss of those peaceful days.

“ Go not, happy day, yet a moment stay,
Brief has been thy measure.
Tarry but a moment in thy flight,
Ere the dusky night comes o'er.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

“O, call my brother back to me !
I can not play alone ;
The summer comes with flower and bee,—
Where is my brother gone ?”

—*Hemans.*

THE days were slipping by, in the meanwhile Edward was working hard that he might make money to buy a home for his little brother, and also to have something laid by in store for a rainy day ; then too, he knew ere long more money would be needed to enable Ulhugh to leave home for better school advantages. How he could be separated from this little brother, he did not know, but “love endureth all things,” and Edward felt Ulhugh would be a great man some day, and that God had placed the child in his hands and would hold him accountable for his future destiny. So great did Edward feel this responsibility that he scarcely took time for rest. Day in and day out he worked hard ; how tired he would get, but who knew it ? He was ever the same loving, kind, cheerful brother. If he had to lean his head against his hands for support, when he heard Ulhugh coming he would look up and greet him with a smile. He had felt badly for several weeks—so tired ! so tired ! no appetite, no energy, no buoyancy. “It is only this spring weather,” he would say. “I have a fine constitution ; I will be all right in a few days ; no time now for sickness. If I stop, on what have we to live ? I must go to my work !

Little brother must not know I am not feeling well, for it will only worry him, poor child, he suffered enough before he ever came to me. God grant I may be able to make him happy the remainder of his life."

When the day was done, Edward with difficulty finished the evening prayer; however, he told Ulhugh nothing of his indisposition. That night he tossed and tumbled upon his bed and no sleep came to his eyes. Next morning, he tried to arise and go to his work, but suddenly all became dark before him, and he fell back exhausted upon his pillow. Ulhugh was greatly alarmed. "My dear, dear brother, what is the matter? Let me go for a doctor."

"No, no, little brother, I am just somewhat dizzy, I will be all right if I lie down a few minutes."

All that day Edward grew worse, the fever had taken a strong hold upon his system, still he hoped all would be right in a few days. Oh, this hope within us that will not die as long as breath lasts—blessed solace, blessed comfort, ever would it lead us on to happier days, shielding us from the bitter and giving us only the sweet—but alas! sunny Hope has a dusky sister—Despair, who waits to crush and destroy us.

Edward had now become delirious. Ulhugh rushed for a doctor. On his way he thought he saw Myrtle, although he had not heard of their arrival. The physician was not long in coming, and when he arrived and gazed upon the face of his patient, he became troubled and slowly shook his head. Not long after this, when the brothers had been left alone, Edward rallied for a few minutes—"Little brother, come near me, and let me put my arms about you and kiss you." A second later the sick brother went into a deep slumber, and as he slept Ulhugh heard a gentle tap. Opening the door cautiously, he saw little Myrtle slowly wending her

way through the long avenue of orange trees. On the doorstep was a beautiful bouquet of flowers, to which a card was attached—

“For the sick young man. I am very sorry!
“MYRTLE DEAN.”

When Edward awoke, his brother showed him the lovely flowers. The sick man smiled: “Little brother, I knew she had a kind heart.” Each day Myrtle continued to bring fresh flowers and leave them on the step of that lonely room; and although she had never spoken a word to either of the brothers, her heart was filled with sympathy for Ulhugh in his distress. She wished she was a boy so that she might go and help nurse Edward. Ulhugh had never known how sick his brother was, which made it doubly sad, when Edward called him to his bedside one day, and in a low voice whispered: “Brother, you did not know I was very sick; still I am, my child, although I have just realised the fact myself.”

“Oh, brother Edward, brother Edward,” sobbed Ulhugh, “what can I do to make you well?”

“Come, little brother, do not weep; let me hold your hand; soon I will lose my grasp, but you will love me still, I know you will. I have only a few short moments to be with you, my boy. Oh, little brother, how sweet life has been since I have had you to live for and love. I was trying to get us a little home, and, also to lay aside some money for your education—but God knows best; I must go to a faraway land. Heaven is indeed sweet, but must I leave my little brother? Must I say good-by? Come let ~~me~~ tell you quickly what I have to say. Here is the ring that dear mother left you. Keep it until you place it upon the hand of a pure and fair virgin. Strive hard to educate yourself;

it is the only thing that cannot be taken from you. Above all things—‘love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind.’ Be noted for your honesty, faithfulness, integrity, and as for kindness and politeness, I know you will never fail in these minor though important characteristics. Father bequeathed to you a good name; cherish it, bind it as a precious jewel about thy neck. Remember few sons ever possessed such a noble father. I have a little money laid aside; you know where I keep it. Buy me a plain pine coffin. I wish the money saved as much as possible for your education. Bury me in this sweet flower-land, and forget not sometimes to come and sit by thy brother’s lonely grave; and as the long gray moss trails o’er my cold dust, and the old trees drop their autumn leaves above my head, remember still your brother Edward; child, I loved you to the end. It is getting dark; draw the curtains aside. Who is it passing by? It is our little flower girl. Ask her in, little brother, I would like to see her.”

With tears streaming down his cheeks, Ulhugh went to the door just as Myrtle was placing some flowers on the step. He paused a moment before he said: “Little ‘sad-eyes’ ” (this was the only name he could then think of) “my brother is dying, and wishes to see you. Will you not come in?”

Myrtle felt it was no time now for mock propriety, so straight to the bedside of the sufferer she went, her sad eyes meeting those of the dying man. “Little girl, I am going away. You do not know me, neither am I acquainted with you, but something tells me as I lie here dying, that you are kind and true. I leave my little brother with no one to love him; will you be a friend to him?”

Myrtle thought: “Surely, does any one wish my

friendship?" and she timidly glanced at Ullugh who sat wringing his hands—a picture of deepest despair. "Will the little girl refuse my dying request?" Myrtle hesitated no longer:

"In peace I would have you die, sir. If your brother ever craves my friendship, I will not withhold my—my—l——"

"Thank you, thank you, little girl. Little brother, are you near me? I had a beautiful, sweet sister once, but I have not seen her since the cruel war—little girl will you forgive me, if I kiss your hand for her sake?"

Myrtle put her thin, white hand to the lips of the dying man, who kissed it reverently.

"Little brother, it is getting cold. Oh, I know what it means; I have only a short time now; will some one sing to me—sweet music let me hear."

Ullugh looked beseechingly toward Myrtle, as if to say, "Please sing, I cannot, my heart is broken." Myrtle had never sung for any one but Cecil, but she was determined to sing now, whatever the effort might cost her. She silently asked help of God, and in a voice tremulous with sad emotion yet sweetly angelic, began singing—

"Jesus lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly."

The dying man gasped—"Sweet—sweet—little—girl—Little brother—I—hear—the—angels—singing—Heaven——"

There was a radiance upon Edward's face, as if kissed by the sunlight of God. The right hand of the dying man was placed in Myrtle's palm; the left was clasped tightly by the weeping little brother. When Edward ceased to speak, Ullugh cried pitiously: "Brother, dear brother, oh, come back to me. I cannot

live without you. Dear brother you were so good and kind to me—brother, brother, will you leave me all alone? Come back and tell me you love me still; speak only one word—oh, you are—gone—gone—gone!”

Myrtle tenderly closed the eyes of Edward Waldo, and then bent over his lifeless body and gently kissed his cold, damp brow. Ullugh though deeply grief stricken noticed this kind act of the little girl, and loved her for it. Myrtle, after folding Edward's hands and placing in them some of the white buds she had brought, felt she could do no more; for could she comfort the living—God alone could do this. As the young girl pondered, not knowing her duty under the circumstances, Cecil came in and stood beside her. He had heard Myrtle singing while passing by, and stopping to listen had hastened into the room on hearing Ullugh's sobs. At one glance Cecil saw Edward's lifeless body, the sorrowing brother, and the anxious, sympathetic look upon Myrtle's sweet face. Going to the little girl he touched her gently: “Child, do you try to do good everywhere? Yet this is no place for a little girl, Myrtle. Go, leave all to me. I will see that everything is done aright.”

Myrtle knew well how kind-hearted Cecil was, and felt assured that he would now be true to his word. Going near to Ullugh she softly whispered, “I am very sorry for you, indeed I am, but look to Jesus, He will help you. I will pray for you,” and then noiselessly turning away, left the room. When Myrtle had gone, Cecil pondered long on the lovely character of this little sister.

“An angel of mercy is that sweet child; what brought her here? Where sickness, sorrow, and suffering dwells, there abides my little Myrtle.”

CHAPTER XIX.

“ And the heart that is soonest awake to the flowers,
Is always the first to be touched by the thorn.”

—*Moore.*

“ Cords that vibrate sweetest pleasure,
Thrill the deepest notes of woe.”

—*Burns.*

It does not take long for little girls to become young ladies. Edith DeLong had long since put away her dolls, yet her life continued to be full of sunshine and happiness. After finding Mrs. Waldo was dead, Mrs. DeLong thought it unnecessary to tell Edith who her true mother was. “I love the child with a mother’s devotion, and the child loves me—why make her unhappy? I see no good in telling her I am not her mother.”

And thus the years passed on—Edith ever believing Mrs. DeLong her real mother. Money had been spent lavishly in giving Edith every advantage in the finest schools North, consequently she sang, played, painted, recited and possessed all the many accomplishments necessary for perfect ease in refined society.

Edith was now a sweet girl graduate, and as she was very young she knew all the joyous merriment that comes to a maiden in her “teens.” Her musical laughter could be heard floating through the house and she was so full of fun that she teased her mother every day yet in a lovely and respectful manner. Edith was rich, beautiful, highly educated, and fascinating. Do you wonder that the men sought her companionship? Had

she possessed only one of these qualities, she would have been popular, but having the combined graces, she became all the more a favorite in society. Each day the mail carrier would bring a number of love letters, which she would read, then throw laughingly aside as she tossed her pretty head. "I wonder if these boys think I am goose enough to believe all their nonsense? I would not give a nickel for all their protestations of love." To-day there was only one letter inclosed in a small, dainty envelope. Edith hastily broke the seal, for she knew it was from Genevieve Greyon, her old chum and schoolmate. As young girls love to read their letters to some one else, Edith will give you the contents of hers.

"WASHINGTON, D. C., May 1. 18—.

"DARLING OLD EDITH: I have just time to say I want you to come on the next train to see me. If you dare say you can't, I will murder you.

"Mother says she is dying to see you—she did not use these words, she knew, of course, her daughter would put it in emphatic language for her. I have a big secret to tell you. There is a handsome fellow here from Philadelphia who has been to see me several times, but I am ashamed to say 'I can't catch him'—I am not pretty enough for him.

"All the girls are breaking their necks over him, and trying to take him from me, but if I can't have him, I am determined that no one here shall take him away from me. So, I have just made up my mind that this over-fastidious young gentleman shall have his heart drawn to a focus; and you, my fair lady, shall come at once to handle the lens. I want him to know that there is one girl in the world before whom he is compelled to fall down and worship. I asked him one day why he did not fall in love, and he answered that he was already in love, that when he was a little boy he met a beautiful girl with sunny hair and deep blue eyes—that their eyes only met for one short moment, but he had

never forgotten that little girl. He says he feels he will meet her again some day, and then she will have to say yes, or no; like any girl would be goose enough to say no to him!

"We talk just like we were sister and brother. I try my best to make him flirt, but there is no flirt in him—he is too noble and grand. His dark eyes look down on me when he thinks me flirting, as if he could wither me. I have told him I know a girl just as pretty as the one he described, and for aught I know, you may be that same girl. Wouldn't it be funny; but, if you are not, he will never think of any one else after he has seen you. I will not tell you his name; wait and— It is quite strange that he has a smile that always reminds me of you. I suppose this is why I like him so much, although he is himself divine. But I will not tell you more of this Adonis—come and see for yourself. Don't wait to have anything made, you have enough dresses now, and if you dress too fine I will be ashamed of my old clothes. Won't we have a 'picnic?'"

"I can't wait to hear from you. Mind, I will take no denial—you must come. Telegraph me you will be here on the next train. I am just dying to see you. 'Till I meet you, old, sweet love, love, love, and a million kisses.' Your own,

"GEN.

"P. S.—Tell your mother if she does not let you come, my heart will just burst with grief and disappointment!—G."

Edith, carrying the letter to her mother and reading it from beginning to end, said, "Mother, what must I do?"

"What do you wish to do, my child, you know I am always willing for you to have any innocent pleasure?"

Mrs. DeLong felt sure Edith would accept the invitation, for she had never known a girl in her life who after graduating and spending a few weeks at home, was not ready to go somewhere else. While at school,

girls long and sigh for home, sweet home, then when they get home they pine for something else. But the poor creatures have been caged so many years in school that they become restless and wish to fly from place to place as if to stretch their pent wings.

Mrs. DeLong had once been a girl, so was not surprised when Edith said, "Mamma, if you have no objection, I will telegraph Genevieve to expect me one week from to-day."

"Do as you like, my child—it is well, but of course I will miss you."

"I will be back in a few short weeks mother."

"I hope you will bring your heart with you, my child—remember I cannot give you to another for a long time yet; if ever—and then I have never met any man whom I thought was the half worthy of my darling."

Edith threw her arms lovingly about Mrs. DeLong "Do not fear, dear mother, that I shall lose my heart; look at the boys who have tried already to steal it away and have not succeeded. I will come back to you as I leave—'heart whole and fancy free.'"

"Well, my child, as you have fully decided to go, I will take you downtown and purchase your clothes, and give them at once to the dressmaker. You will have no time to lose."

Consequently, Edith and her mother were exceedingly busy, and by the end of the week two large Saratoga trunks had been packed to almost bursting, and sent to the depot. Edith shortly afterward followed her baggage, and bidding her father and mother an affectionate, tearful adieu, the young girl was an hour later flying over ground between Baltimore and Washington. The maiden's heart beat quick as she thought of the pleasure in store, for she had never seen Washington, and now longed to gaze upon its many wonders.

"I am impatient to see our nation's capitol, and—and I wonder who that young man can be of whom 'Gen' wrote? Oh, but he is just like all the young men I know—tiresome to death. What a nuisance to be obliged to sit and talk for hours to a stupid boy; well, well, I have to endure this and be bored to death, as is the fate of all young ladies."

Edith looked out of the window awhile, and then to vary the dreary monotony read herself to sleep, and did not awake until she heard the loud cry of the conductor: "Washington, all out for Washington." Becoming suddenly conscious that she had been lost in slumber, Edith looked inquiringly about her, a second later, she exclaimed with the impulse of a schoolgirl, "There is dear old 'Gen'," and the two girls rushed into each others arms and hugged and kissed with so much demonstration that the old ladies smiled as it made them think of their joyous youth.

Mrs. Greyon's elegant carriage awaited Edith, and as the two girls rode over the clean wide streets, you could never have repeated their conversation—it was buzz, buzz, neither maiden ever finishing a sentence, being always interrupted by her enthusiastic chum. Edith and Genevieve were supremely happy. It would have been hard to tell which heart possessed more joy. "Edith, here we are at home, and there is dear mamma—the best mother in the world. Mother, look at Edith. Is she not perfectly beautiful?"

But before Mrs. Greyon could make reply to her daughter's remark Genevieve had caught Edith about the waist and was leading her up the long stairway.

"Edith, you will have to be in a hurry—I thought you would have been here yesterday and by this time entirely rested, so I made an engagement for your especial benefit with that young man. You remember

I wrote you about him. I had no way of informing him that you did not arrive yesterday, hence am expecting him certainly this evening. Just wash your hands and somewhat straighten your hair, and we will go down to supper; and then you must come and put on your very finest. I want you to look prettier than you ever did in all your life. I am simply dying to see that boy worship you, for that is just what he is going to do. Oh, how jealous all the girls will be—but here, you look all right. Come on down to supper. We have no time to eat very much now, but after the boys leave to-night, we will make up for lost time, and we will eat and talk until after midnight.”

After this conversation it is not surprising the two girls should have excused themselves from the tea table before Mr. and Mrs. Greyon half-finished their evening meal.

“Now, Edith,” quizzed Genevieve, “what are you going to put on?”

“Wait and see, Miss ‘Gen.’ Your curiosity is running too high; yet I will tell you this much—I am going to put on the simplest dress I have.” Genevieve left her friend for a few minutes and gathering some flowers sent them by the servant for Edith to wear; the young hostess then went into the parlor to see that everything was tastily arranged. She thought she remained only a short time, hence was astonished on returning to her room at finding her chum leisurely reading one of Longfellow’s poems—having already adorned herself for the evening. The light shone softly on the golden hair, which was caught in a shining coil just above the plump, dimpled neck, and in the wavy tresses were twined single white hyacinths, thus enhancing the loveliness of the sunny silken meshes. The simple, girlish dress of pale blue mull fell in soft

folds about the faultless form. The fine lace at her neck was too sheer to hide the swan-like neck. The sleeves were short, which made Genevieve wish to kiss the round pink chiseled arms. Edith was the very image of her mother; not lovelier, for no one could have been more beautiful than Mrs. Waldo as a young maiden.

Genevieve stood entranced, looking upon the sweet girlish figure before her; and as she did so, the door-bell rang. Edith heard the sound, and at that moment a dart seemed to have been suddenly thrust into her heart. She hastily viewed herself in the large mirror—"Will he think me pretty?" and then she abruptly turned away. "I am ashamed of myself; of course he will not."

"Edith DeLong, I am satisfied you will conquer him, for I never saw a more beautiful creature in all my life. Come old sweet, I am impatient to see the fun."

Edith could not understand why her heart beat so loudly; she had met many young men—what was it now that made her lose her usual composure of manner? Before she had scarcely become aware of her surroundings, Genevieve had led her into the parlor and was introducing her. "Miss DeLong, allow me to present my friend, Mr. Felix."

Raymond Felix bowed low, and then raising his head caught a glimpse of Edith's deep violet eyes. The sweet, girlish face at once became suffused with blushes, thus deepening the pink roses in her dimpled cheeks. How angry she was with herself for showing her emotion. Raymond's heart gave a sudden bound of joy. "I have found her at last; she is the same little girl of whom I have dreamed so many years. I was a boy then; I am a man now. I will never lose her

again." Edith studied Raymond's face—was he handsome? Yes, exceedingly; yet nobility and benignity stamped the open countenance rather than good looks. His bearing was easy and graceful, and he possessed every element of the true gentleman; being almost punctilious to those about him in his polish and elegance. Consequently, he won the affection of both old and young, but especially did he steal sweet maiden's hearts, hence it is no wonder the evening passed most pleasantly for Edith and Genevieve while in such genial companionship. The city clock tolled eleven. Raymond rose immediately, astonished at the lateness of the hour. "Miss Genevieve—

' Too late I stayed—forgive the crime,
Unheeded flew the hours;
How noiseless falls the foot of time,
That only treads on flowers.' "

CHAPTER XX.

“He that wants money, means and content is
Without thee good friend.”

—*Shakespeare.*

MANY were the weary days for Ulhugh after Edward's death. Everywhere the sorrowing boy turned reminded him of his absent brother. “Oh, if I could only die, but no, I am left here—Oh, Maker, for what? But brother would not have me question God. I must love God and the little sad-eyed girl said I must look to Jesus and he would help me; but what does this little girl know of trouble? She is rich and has many friends and relatives. And I do not suppose she ever had a care or sorrow in her life even if she does look sad.”

Ulhugh often met Myrtle now, and had learned to talk to her. The two friends—for such they had become—sat many times under the old oak tree near Edward's grave conversing for hours at a time. One day Ulhugh said: “I wish I had a friend who would lend me money for a few years, so that I might go to college, I could pay after finishing school work and with big interest. I could make money when educated so much better than now. An ignorant man has a hard time.”

Myrtle's face brightened as she listened to Ulhugh. “I am so glad to hear you speak as you do. I know you will succeed in life. God always helps those who try to help themselves. Have you ever asked any one to lend you money?”

"No, it would be useless; who would lend a poor boy money? I will never be humiliated by asking favors of men only to be refused."

It was evident from Myrtle's face that she was thinking of something very important. "I cannot help believing, Ullugh, that you will be educated."

"Nor I, for I am saving every dollar I make for this purpose; yet the money seems to come slowly, and the days are flying swiftly in which I should be going to school. I see your brother coming; I must be going. By the way, he seems to love you very much, he must make it pleasant for you?" Ullugh did not see the flush that came over Myrtle's face; he was looking toward his brother's grave. "Strange, sighed the lad, "you have so many to love you while I had only one, and he is gone. Good-by, I will see you again soon."

Oh, how little we know of the secret chambers in another's heart. Envy not the lot of thy fellow-being, for you do not see the anguish pent up in his soul's dark recesses, hid forever from your impenetrable view! Cecil had drawn near to where Myrtle was sitting. "Little one, I have searched everywhere for you; what are you doing with this lad? I do not like you being with him so much; he is not socially your equal, and if he was, some one else wishes your company—can you guess who?"

Myrtle did not seem to hear Cecil's last remark, and with childlike trust looked into Cecil's face: "Brother Cecil, I believe you are mistaken in Ullugh; I think he is of high birth but however lowly his parents may have been, he is certainly a noble, true boy. I am indeed sorry for him, for he is anxious for an education and has no money."

"Well, little pet, are you going to take upon you the sorrows of the world? if so, I have been grieving a long

time for a kiss from your sweet lips," and as Cecil spoke, he drew Myrtle toward him, although he saw it would be with great reluctance that the innocent girl would kiss him. "Ah, will she never love me?" he thought.

"I wish to ask a favor of you Cecil," never dreaming of the nature of his sister's request, he replied:

"It shall be granted, my pet, to the half of my kingdom."

"Not so fast, brother Cecil, my request is large—listen: Ulhugh wishes to go to school, yet has not sufficient means. Will you lend him money with interest until after he has finished college? He can then easily make the money and return it to you."

"Why, my little pet, this is truly a great request; do you realize that it would take a large sum of money? I know nothing of this boy, and every cent I might give him might be the same as throwing it away."

"Brother Cecil, Ulhugh will return the money. You say you love me, now prove it by granting my request."

"Ah, Myrtle, my sweet pet, if you doubt my love after years of tenderness and kindness, will granting this favor prove my deep affection? If so, I am glad you put me to the test. My love, little one, is equal to a greater crucible—I would sacrifice anything for my little sister, yet she seems unconscious of the fact," and Cecil pressed Myrtle to his throbbing bosom and kissed her ardently. "Your wish is granted, my sweet little pet."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, brother Cecil. I am so glad you have decided to do such a good deed. God will bless you for it."

"My child, God will not bless me in this, for what I have done was only to prove my love for my pet." Poor, innocent Myrtle thought it was a brother's love,

and as such tried to show sisterly appreciation. Even Cecil tried to imagine "If I had a sister, I would love her as I do this child." Ah, ever would Satan cheat us—clothing the blackest sin in the whitest robes.

"Come, Cecil, it is getting late, sister Leita will be waiting for us. You know how she longs to have you in her presence. I think she is the most devoted wife I ever saw. You should be the proudest man in the world to possess such a jewel; but there is no use telling you this fact. I suppose every man thinks his wife the sweetest and best woman in the universe."

As the brother and sister walked home together, Cecil had little to say—Myrtle did most of the talking. "Oh, I am so happy, brother Cecil; I hope it will not be long ere I can prove to you my love and appreciation of the favor shown me to-day."

"My pet, may the day never come in which you will have to sacrifice any pleasure for me. To be in your presence, little one, is all that I desire."

When Cecil and Myrtle had neared the front gate, Leita saw them coming, and throwing a book aside which she was reading, ran with haste to meet her husband.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come, my darling; I have been very lonesome without you," and the sweet wife tenderly kissed her husband. Cecil received the caress as a natural right due him. Leita had long since thought men had been given on earth to be loved, and woman's duty was to shower upon her lord every affection. As Myrtle went into the house, she did not know when she had ever been so happy. To bestow a kindness upon another was her greatest joy.

A few days later she took her accustomed stroll in the woods, and sat near Edward's grave. As she rested, she wished for Ullugh that she might learn if he

had received any money from Cecil. Myrtle's wish was soon gratified, for Ulhugh had seen her leave home, and had followed her. After the usual greeting and a few remarks, Ulhugh said: "I am so happy I cannot keep my joy to myself. What do you think? Some one has been kind enough to lend me money until I finish school. I have puzzled my brain to know who it can be. I have many kind acquaintances, but did not know I possessed a friend so generous."

Myrtle fearing she might betray herself, tried to think of something to say.

"I am so glad for you; but what are you going to do?"

"Why, I am going to school just as soon as I can get ready. I have a check for several hundred dollars. The bank that issued it wrote me a note telling me to draw on them whenever I needed money. Although I do not know who it is that is so kind to me, I feel that if there is one person in the world taking so much interest in me, I should begin in earnest to make a man of myself. May God help me never to shake the confidence of that person who has so fully trusted me."

"I am glad to hear you say this Ulhugh, and I do not believe you ever will. I have noticed you often, and have yet to see you do that which is wrong."

"Thank you, nothing does me so much good as encouragement. I must now say good-by; I have a little business to attend to a few miles from here, and will leave to-night. I may not return to this place for several months—good-by."

Ulhugh took Myrtle's proffered hand and shook it—was that all? Myrtle's tender dark eyes sought Ulhugh's honest face; neither spoke—why should they? Both were timid and shy; he only a sturdy lad; she was yet a sweet lassie. As Ulhugh walked away, he

wished to turn and see Myrtle's sad eyes once more; but no, this would not do. "I must not be so impolite as to look back."

After Ulhugh's departure, Myrtle sat for some time wrapped in deep meditation.

CHAPTER XXI.

“Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold.”

—*Shakespeare.*

As Myrtle grew older, Cecil was more marked in his attention to her. Strange to say, no one, not even Leita, noticed his misdemeanor. The wife's eyes were closed as usual to everything evil in her husband. Years had slipped by since Myrtle was a little cooing baby. She was no longer a poor, puny child, but had developed into a maiden of surpassing beauty. Who ever thought a child so homely would become a beautiful woman? Yet Myrtle's features had always been perfect, and her eyes even in babyhood were divine. Her mother had dressed her, as a child, most unbecomingly, but now Myrtle was old enough to make her own dresses, and to arrange her long, dark hair into graceful coils about her queenly head. She seemed transformed into another being—her complexion was an unusual whiteness beside her large, lustrous, glowing, dark eyes, her pretty ears resembled tiny pink sea shells, and her small, even teeth were white and glistening. There was something about the pretty mouth that bespoke decision of character—but where were Myrtle's dimples. Idma Dean had no dimples—they would not have been in keeping with her calm queenly face. When you see dimples, you naturally expect to see fun, merriment, and laughing darlings. You would never think of these things when you gazed

upon Idma Dean. Could you have seen her as she stood erect with faultless form, you would have whispered—"What a beautiful queen she is, yet haughty."

Not so fast—hear her gentle, tender voice, with its musical accent; see the sweet smile that lights the dreamy eyes and pensive face, and you will feel ashamed of yourself for having given the young girl a single wicked thought. Myrtle had no peace at home, for Mrs. Dean made it her special duty to find fault with her from morning till night. Myrtle thought she could not endure her mother's harsh treatment, yet the young girl was obliged to submit to her lot for she could not leave home—where could she have gone? She thought of the high name her father and mother bore, yet had her parents been more lowly born, her keen sense of propriety would have kept her from telling her troubles abroad. Myrtle felt that she should have gone to a boarding school long ere this, but Mrs. Dean, knowing her desire to attend college, thwarted the child's wishes.

Myrtle, however, was very fond of reading, and as she never selected any but the best authors, the child gained much knowledge notwithstanding she was debarred from school. Yet woe if Mrs. Dean ever saw her with a book. It meant some new drudgery added to the girl's life. Myrtle performed the duties in her mother's house as one in a treadmill. To all of Mrs. Dean's cruel words she never made reply, nor showed in any way her deeply wounded heart; only sometimes a dark flush would suffuse her sad face. When her mother began scolding her: "Myrtle, I have no more use for you than I have for the waifs on the streets."

Myrtle would think: "She is my mother; let her say to me what she will; do to me what she will; I will stand by the Bible, which teaches me to honor my parents."

The time had been when Myrtle felt she could lay her tired head on Cecil's loving breast and weep away her many sorrows, but she was too large now, and there was another and greater reason that made Myrtle avoid Cecil, an incomprehensible fear came over her whenever she was in his presence. "Call his love a brother's if you will, yet I would rather endure a mother's harshest abuses than to accept his words of affection," she thought. "I wonder if sorrow has taught me to be suspicious and cold? And yet what avails my fears? What can I do? He lives in the same house with me; I see him wherever I go—if for a walk, he is sure to meet me before I return home; true, he does nothing I can openly question, but at times he acts so strangely. Often he will begin and say—'Oh, Myrtle, my——' and then bite his lips—his face becoming suddenly flushed, then he will jump up and leave me without another word, not even looking back. Is every one blind? Is his wife blind? Is mother blind? Is father blind? Who sees my distress? Where shall I turn for comfort? Yet if I had some one to whom I might pour out my woes—what would I have to tell? nothing—nothing—definite! Oh, my poor heart, am I becoming crazed?"

This was the state of affairs when the time came for Cecil, Leita, and Myrtle to take their usual trip to Florida. The day had been when Myrtle's heart leaped for joy at the thought of traveling—anywhere, everywhere, rather than receive her mother's abuse, but this time she shrank from going with Cecil. "I will beg mother to let me remain at home." Poor child, she did not realize this was the worst thing she could do. Summoning all her courage, she went to Mrs. Dean—"Mother, please let me stay at home, I think perhaps it is best that I should; and mother, if you knew my feel-

ings, you would gladly let me remain here. I do not care how much work you make me do, if I can but stay at home. Mother, I beg and beseech you to grant my request. I cannot go; oh mother, I must not go."

It was not so much the words that Myrtle used, but her imploring accent that should have touched the hardest heart; yet strange, the mother's heart was not touched. Instead an exultant sneer came into her face as she looked down upon Myrtle: "You think it best you should remain at home? As if your opinion would weigh one second with me. Oh, how delighted I am to know you do not wish to go. I will now take the greatest pleasure in sending you. I have thought all these years you wanted to go. I then would have kept you at home, but I sent you merely to gratify Cecil and Leita's pleasure. If you were to stand and beg me until your head was as white as cotton, I would make you go just to see you miserable—leave me, Idma—Idma—yes, that is your hateful name—go from my sight."

Mrs. Dean never permitted herself to gaze long upon Myrtle, for the girl's calm dignity seemed to unnerve her. Myrtle turned away with a deep sigh: "Oh, what must I do? shall I go to my father?"

When Mr. Dean returned home that day, Myrtle went to him and asked if she might stay at home. "You will have to consult your mother, my daughter—whatever she says will be perfectly agreeable to me."

"I have been to her, father, and she said I must go."

"Well, her word should have been sufficient, my child; I am surprised and grieved that you should have come to me—once for all, my daughter, never ask of me anything your mother has refused you. She is always with you, and knows best what is for your good. Remember, my child, what I now tell you."

Myrtle turned away sadly: "My doom is sealed, I am compelled to go to Florida. Mother, father, do you not see I am in trouble—where shall I go for sympathy and love? My Maker, I call upon Thee—have mercy upon thy heart-sick child."

A few weeks later Myrtle was in Florida. She did all she could to keep away from Cecil, yet it was of little avail, for he seemed to divine her meaning and sought her companionship more than ever, trying to win again her trust and confidence. Once he had cried out in despair: "Myrtle, my pet, what have I done to make you shun me as you do? You cannot deny this statement, for you are too conscientious to tell me an untruth."

"Brother Cecil, if I have not been a devoted sister, forgive me. I hope never to be ungrateful to you for all your goodness to me. I know you are the only being on earth who ever gave me a kind word, yet brother——"

The words Myrtle tried to utter died upon her lips as Leita drew near.

"Cecil, I know of a lady who lives about two miles from here who is very ill; her husband has just sent a message to me, and begs that I come and help nurse his wife. Of course, I cannot refuse the poor man. Myrtle, I will leave the keys with you, as I do not know how long I may be absent. Good-by, husband." Cecil kissed his loving, devoted wife, and helped her into the buggy that awaited her at the front gate. Was the husband glad the wife was gone? Myrtle's heart beat quick and fast, and she trembled with fear on seeing Leita driven from home.

It was some time after tea; the servants had finished their evening work about the house, and had hastened to their respective homes, which were some distance from the village of E——.

One by one the passers had wended their homeward way, it seemed as if all the inmates of the world had suddenly ceased to exist, and a stillness that might almost be felt rested on the old mansion.

Myrtle walked into the flower garden; took her seat under an old rustic bower thickly overgrown with honeysuckles and evening-glories. In a half-dreamy mood the young girl caught some of the pure blossoms, and twirling them in her pretty hands, twined them with seeming unconsciousness in her wavy dark hair, and then in the same thoughtless fashion threw carelessly about her bare, rose-tinted shoulders a long graceful vine, thus trimming the white simple dress she wore in sylvan beauty. The moon peeped here and there through the leafy bower, and casting her silver rays upon the young girl made her appear even more wondrously beautiful. Was ever "Cleopatra, star-eyed Egyptian, glorious Sorceress of the Nile" more bewitching in her loveliness? With slender, tapering fingers, Myrtle put the vines aside in her rustic bower, making a leafy window through which she might look far-away to the star-flecked heavens; gazing with eyes that seemed not of earth, for they were glowing with dreamy, angelic luster. Verily she looked a vestal virgin in her maidenly purity. •

"Chaste as the icicle,
That's curdled by the the frost from purest snow,
And hangs on Diana's temple."

"Ah," the young girl murmured, "I had forgotten to day is my birthday—yes, it is the fated 'Ides of March.' " Idma drew a deep sigh.

Cecil stood unobserved by Myrtle at the entrance of the bower. He knew the sweet girl's fair brow would

be clouded if he drew near, yet felt he must speak to her: "Myrtle, my pet——"

The young girl was startled. "Cecil, Cecil, how you frightened me!"

"I frighten you, little one? I who have loved you all these years; I who would live for you; I who would die for you? Yes, Myrtle, my darling, you are dearer to me than all the world beside."

"Hush, Cecil! hush! you know not what you are saying!"

Heeding not the girl's words, Cecil fell on his knees at Myrtle's feet, and grasping her tiny white hands, showered upon them ardent kisses. Myrtle shuddered and trembled as if she had been a frightened fawn pursued by wicked hunters. "Ah, you fear me; child I will not harm you. Love me, Myrtle, and let me love you. There is no sin in love—my darling, you are too prudent, too prudish; pity me Myrtle. For years I have worshipped you. When your own mother despised you, I befriended and shielded you. I have tried so hard to subdue my love, yet Myrtle, your loveliness is more than I can resist. To possess you fair one, I fain would lose my soul. Oh, Myrtle, my darling, you do not know the days, months, and even years I have suffered in trying to keep this love within my own breast; many times have I walked the floor at night and almost committed suicide rather than to tell you of my love—but you heeded not my sufferings. You shun me, for when have you bestowed upon me the sweet and loving caresses you were wont to shower upon me in your childhood days? Yet, darling I will forgive all your past cruelties, if you will now, my pet, love me. Oh, will you not, my sweet one?" and Cecil pressed Myrtle's white hands to his throbbing bosom, as he exclaimed wildly: "Myrtle, my love, my all,

“speak to me. Why do you turn from me—do not scorn me. Know you not I am the only one on earth who loves you?”

“Ah, Cecil, Cecil, would to God I had died before this day—this fated ‘Ides’ had ever dawned upon me. Oh, man you are crazed, and know not what you say. An evil spirit possesses you. For shame, Cecil, you have forgotten you are married to the best woman in the world, who is too pure herself to even suspect her husband of loving another. Cecil, I was a child when I came into this bower, but my distress has made me a woman. You say for years you have loved me while all others despised me, and now what do you ask in return for your love? A love, Cecil Clair, that before I would listen to it I would fain sleep the sleep of death and hide myself beneath the cold dark waves in yonder lake.”

Myrtle’s calm sweet voice had almost subdued the demon in Cecil’s breast and he was about to enfold his sister in his brotherly arms and ask her forgiveness when the young girl mistook his meaning, and with lifted arms which seemed moulded into perfect beauty, waved him away. As she did so her hair by some chance became uncoiled and flowed about her white chiselled shoulders, in dark, abundant wavelets—kissing the evening glories at her feet. In her loveliness she looked fairer than the fairest young Amazon, as with queenly dignity and eyes flashing with wounded rage, she seemed to scorch the poor wretch who lay at her feet. In accent so cold and icy that it seemed it would have chilled her own poor soul Idma cried:

“Back, Cecil, back; touch me not. Is this your boasted love; your brother’s love? Did you try to charm me all these years, Cecil, yet for what? Let your answer be before the judgment bar of God. As an

child you petted me; I trusted you and loved you, but oh, my poor heart, how have you requited the love of a true sister? Cecil Clair, begone from my sight. The love I bore you is turned to direst hatred. There is a wide, deep gulf between us that shall separate us through all eternity. Go, I despise you, I loath you."

Woman, trample not the worm under foot, lest it turn and sting thee!

"You say you hate me, but I shall make you love me, sweet one," and Cecil drew near as if to clasp Myrtle to his throbbing breast.

The young girl was too quick, for with supernatural fleetness she flew by Cecil, leaving him stamping his foot upon the ground and grinding his teeth with furious rage. Myrtle ran to her room and tried to lock her door, but remembered the key was broken. What shall I do? Oh, if Leita were here. But must I tell a wife of her husband's perfidy and forever make her miserable? No, I could not blight her happiness. What is left me? Love him? No! Oh, my Father, never, never, a thousand times, never!" and the poor girl walked the floor and tore her hair in wild despair.

She tried to pray, but knew not how to frame her sentences; she went to the window and there saw near by the broad, placid lake. As she stood with beating heart, looking to the faraway sky there gradually came over her beautiful face a calm, peaceful smile. A moment later she went to her writing desk, and taking up pen wrote a hasty note. Then she went to her bureau drawer and drew forth a spotless white robe, with neck and sleeves of finest lace. This she hurriedly put on, after which she combed her soft tangled tresses.

"Oh, here are white buds," and the young girl took the fresh roses and entwined them in her long silken hair and then pinning some flowers on her bosom, mur-

mured: "There, this will do, I will meet my Saviour adorned in spotless white—but ah, me—the soul is what he wants pure, and she knelt reverently by the side of her bed. Not one word did she speak; only the fair lips moved; the sweet face was turned heavenward; the small tapering fingers were clasped over her white bosom; and the lamplight with its deep orange shade cast a mellow glow about the fair angelic form. There was at that moment only a faint zephyr, yet it was sufficient to turn the shutters of the blind next to the front garden. At the same time some one passed by the window and stopped. Myrtle knew it not, for she seemed to have forgotten the sad past as she held sweet communion with her God. When she rose, she took her Bible and kissed it. As she did so her form was reflected in the long beveled mirror, and the young girl smiled at sight of her pale face which seemed more akin to tears than gladness. She then passed from her room, leaving her door ajar.

But where was Cecil. After Myrtle left him, he was for a time a raging lion, not knowing what he did, and caring less for what he might do. He looked here, there, and everywhere for Myrtle, but found her not.

"Where could she have gone? but I will find her. How dare she scorn me? Ah, it shall not be!"

He searched the yard over many times, and had almost despaired of finding his treasure, when he happened at this moment to hear the shutters to Myrtle's blinds as they turned, when with one quick glance Cecil saw Myrtle's kneeling form which seemed in its maidenly loveliness more than an angel's.

It was enough—the demon suddenly left the crazed man when he saw Myrtle praying. "My God! My God! forgive me. I shall go at once and kneel by her side—but no, I would frighten her. And she could not

believe I had so soon repented. I will remain out here, and maybe she will soon sleep and forget her troubles." Cecil walked about the garden for some time, and wondered what it was best for him to do.

"I said she would sleep—no, no; Myrtle will not sleep to-night—I know too well her sensitive nature. Cursed dog that I am, what shall I do? what course shall I pursue? Nothing remains for me to do but go and implore her forgiveness. I will delay no longer." With light, cautious steps Cecil went to Myrtle's door and knocked gently, receiving no answer he knocked again—still no answer.

"Myrtle, forgive me, child, do not fear to answer me." Awaiting a few seconds, he called again—"Myrtle, Myrtle." Can it be possible she is not in her room? "Myrtle, please answer me; I am coming in if you do not. I am your brother again, child; your brother forever, sister," and Cecil pushed open the door. One glance was sufficient to show him Myrtle was gone. Cecil was about to leave the room when his eyes accidentally fell upon a note lying on the table addressed to him. With trembling hands he broke the seal:

"DEAR BROTHER CECIL: You saved my life once, I save yours now; may you yet live to be noble and true. I lay down my life gladly that others may abide in happiness and peace. Good-by—where will your little sister be when you read this? God be with you, and bless and forgive you, as I do.

"MYRTLE."

As Cecil read the note, each word seemed a coal of fire burning his innermost soul. Rushing from the room he cried: "Fool, villain that I am. What have I done? Oh, that some one would shoot me in my tracks. Myrtle, Myrtle," and the echo resounded her

name, as if to mock and taunt him: "Where shall I find her? Ah, to the lake she must have gone, for did she not say something about sleeping beneath its blue waves rather than love me? Thither I will fly to her rescue."

Myrtle, after leaving her room, had walked down the back steps, and wended her way to the water's edge. "I must get heavy weights and tie them to my body so that I shall never rise, for I do not wish any one to gaze upon my face in death. I will take a boat and row to the deepest place—and then the plunge of death—death, did I say? My Father, what am I about to do? Is it wrong to die but as thou shouldst call us? I care not to live; life is a weary burden. My Creator, my Maker, teach me my duty. Death is nothing, it is the hereafter. Can I, oh God, stand in thy sight blameless if I die by my own hands?"

Myrtle looked beyond the wide, deep lake and then gazed upward at the cold, gray sky. A cloud seemed to hide the pale moon from the young girl's eyes, as she cried: "Oh, mother, you were right, 'Idma,' 'Idma', is the name I should bear, for my life is indeed one dark night; surely I am the child of the fated Ides! My Father, hide not thy face from me lest I die—what! I cannot breathe, I am suffocating, and why this sudden horrible pain at my heart?" She tore the dainty robe from her, thus disclosing her white chiselled shoulders. The flowers she wore fell at her feet, and were bathed in the cold limpid lake. The night winds caught her long dark tresses, and blew them about her faultless form in wild dishevelment. Her tiny slippers were filled with the sand and pebbles of the lake, but she felt it not. On, on, she went, muttering to herself: "Father, pity, pity, oh pity." Her hands were blue from being clinched so tightly, and sinking down upon

the white sand she prayed—"My God, my Maker, show me what to do? My Redeemer, my Saviour—hush! hark! I hear a sound. No, it is but the wild beating of my throbbing heart."

"Myrtle, Myrtle!"

"My Maker, it is 'he!'" The young girl tried to scream, but could not utter a sound; tried to move, but was rooted to the ground.

Suddenly everything became dark as night, and a fearful dizziness came over her. "Myrtle, Myrtle, my sweet one," and then ardent kisses were showered upon her cold, white forehead. With a low moan Myrtle reeled and felt herself clasped in Cecil Clair's strong arms. The poor girl struggled, yet it was of little avail; her head fell back and she knew no more. A deathlike swoon had come upon the ill-fated girl, and Idma, the child of the 'Ides' lay cold and unconscious in Cecil's embrace!

CHAPTER XXII.

“Come wander with me for the moonbeams are bright,
On river and forest, o’er mountain and lea.”

—*Jeffreys.*

THE 6th of June, the day Genevieve had appointed for the picnic at Mount Vernon, in Edith’s honor, dawned bright and clear. Promptly at 7 o’clock Raymond rang Mrs. Greyon’s door-bell, having come to escort Edith and Genevieve on this joyous occasion. The young folks did not dwell on serious thoughts, but seemed to sip the sweet nectar and enjoyment of buoyant youth, and as the day wore away happiness increased with each hour, yet as pleasure does not abate the appetite, but rather increases the desire for food, all soon become so hungry that it was with difficulty that the artist prevailed upon the party to group themselves for a picture. This task having been completed, the chaperons spread the white tablecloth on the green grass to receive the many good things—nice fried spring chicken; deviled ham; hard-boiled eggs, barbecued pig; deviled crabs; boiled ham; sweet peach pickles; bread of every description; salads of every variety; cakes, custards, and pies to suit the appetite of the most fastidious epicure; ice-cold lemonade; raspberries; ice cream; candies. It was just such a lunch as would have made a hungry schoolboy leap for joy, and wish for a picnic every day in the year.

Raymond was very attentive to Edith, and continually handed her things which he thought she would relish; yet he himself appeared to have lost his appetite. Edith's quick eye observing this, she commenced to tease him: "You must be in love Mr. Felix? It is said people in love do not eat much, if this be true, I am certainly not in love, for I never was so hungry as now," and as she spoke she turned her sweet, blue eyes upon Raymond with bewitching sauciness. "Ha! ha! in love Mr. Felix, in love!"

Raymond's dark eyes searched and pierced Edith's heart as he looked into her face. "Be it so, Miss De-Long, but as you are so wise it is strange your wisdom has not taught you whom I love." Edith's face became suffused with blushes. She tried in vain to hide her countenance from Raymond's earnest gaze, and it was with some effort that she continued to eat her lunch, which was now being partaken of in a subdued, quiet way.

"Ah," thought Raymond, "I knew she could be sober notwithstanding her merriment and fun; for there is an undercurrent of thoughtfulness about her that makes her the jewel she is."

Luncheon being over, Raymond filled an old-fashioned gourd with cool water, and poured it upon Edith's white hands, giving her at the same time his large silk handkerchief that she might dry them. "Come, Miss Edith, you have yet to see the spot where Washington rests. Suppose we go now to where his body first lay entombed." As it was but a short walk, the young couple soon stood before a cavity that appeared to have been dug in the mountain side. It was a small vault bricked under and above the ground, fast filling with leaves and earth. "Miss Edith, there is nothing to be seen here, let us walk to the hero's present vault."

"I will be ready as soon as I pick up one of these leaves from our great general's tomb."

"I will get it for you?" said Raymond.

"No, I thank you, I prefer getting it myself, for I wish to say Edith DeLong picked up the leaf, and not that Raymond Felix did," and quick as thought, Edith stooped and picked a large green leaf, which she entwined with some of the long verdant grasses that waved at her feet. "Now I am ready to go, Mr. Felix." The young people walked until they came in front of a large vault, which was closed by a massive iron gate, and looking through the grating, they could see two sarcophagi containing the ashes of George and Martha Washington. Raymond took his hat from his head, and stood reverently before the vault, for he felt he was in the presence of one who although dead, yet lives through the good he did, and would live through all eternity. Each day in the years to come would sons of America stand where he now stood, and as they thought of the pure life of their great commander, would themselves determine to live better lives; for they must feel that this present existence is not all of life, but that righteousness and purity of character shall live in the memory of mankind long after we lay cold in death.

Edith stood near Raymond. She too was thinking, but such thoughts as were more in keeping with a woman's emotions. "This is his wife who now sleeps by his side, and I have no doubt but that she loved and esteemed him so highly that no task was a burden to her when performed for him. I do not suppose she ever had a thought of self, for it was ever her desire to please and make her husband happy. When he became disheartened, her words of love and encouragement spurred him on to greater deeds of victory."

Neither of the young people had spoken for several minutes—at last Raymond broke the silence: “Miss Edith, I suppose you know that the sarcophagi rest on electric wires extending to the house, to which are attached bells that give the alarm to inmates in the house, should robbers ever try to desecrate the tomb? The gate is locked, and I am told the key is thrown in the Potomac River. But come with me, Miss Edith, I know you are tired; you have not stopped one minute to-day. The lovers then strolled here and there over the green mountain side, trying to find a suitable place to rest. At last, from the gaze of any one, they sat beneath an old oak tree, whose drooping branches waved just above the long grassy turf.

Edith wore a simple lawn which was cool and picnic-like, and her large white leghorn hat was trimmed in dainty primroses. Her hair had not been arranged since early morn, and as she took her hat in her hands, little golden ringlets stole here and there over her pretty head, making her even more betwitchingly picturesque than was her usual wont. And her ruby, pouting lips, dark violet eyes, and dimpled face made her to look almost childlike. Yet Edith was a woman who combined with her gentle nature a saucy piquancy, which irresistible charm added much to her already fascinating qualities; hence she was easily the pet in all elegant society. As Raymond sat near Edith and looked into her sweet, girlish face, he felt he would give the world if he could possess her as his own. “But, dare I tell her of my love?” and his handsome face suddenly became saddened. Edith perceived his changed expression: “Why, Mr. Felix, what is the matter? Lately every time I have been with you, your face has become so long and woebegone that I have about decided to cut your acquaintance; for I do not care to be such a

dreadful bore. I believe I will leave you this minute to your own meditations—What say you? Will you be happy then?" and she gave her head a pretty toss, and a twinkle of merriment came into her mischievous blue eyes.

"Tell me quickly, am I the cause of your discomfiture? Mother says I am her sunshine, but I must be your cloud of darkness; unless perhaps you have heard sad news from home? but excuse me, I did not wish to be rude." For Edith saw Raymond's face grow darker and more sad the longer she spoke. She determined not to say another word, and await the young man's answer.

"Hear me, Miss Edith," and Raymond's voice grew tender and low. "Many years ago my father took me to a little village in the far South, what his mission was I never knew, but while there a good lady died who had been the wife of his best friend. I was taken to the funeral, and after the poor woman had been buried, father requested me to put some flowers that he had brought on her grave. I obeyed my father's commands, and as I did so a little girl with dark blue eyes and golden curls came also and scattered white roses about the newly made mound. I saw her only for a moment, yet it was sufficient time to impress her loveliness indelibly on my mind, for I have seen her face ever afterward in my dreams. I endeavored to forget her, yet perceiving this to be impossible tried to find her. But as the years passed by, I despaired of seeing my sweet treasure, and hope failing me, I grew weary of life and fell sick. It was then that father sent me to this place, thinking a change would help me. Gradually I became worse until one day all unexpectedly I found my blue-eyed angel a child no longer, but a woman beautiful and fair; and although sweet and

pure yet in one thing, she was cruel—she laughed her lovers to scorn, and in her glee and fun saw not at her feet a heart bleeding and torn. Ah, fair creature, wonder not I am tortured. Mercy, mercy, sweet Edith, ere I die!”

The merriment in Edith's sweet girlish face changed to a crimson blush. Tear hiding beneath the long silken lashes, stealing by roses and dimples in the round baby-like cheek, fell in dewy pearls upon her soft white hands. Raymond observing the young girl's emotion, exclaimed: “God be praised, Edith, my darling, my all! you sympathize with me, and pity is akin to love. Ah, my angel, with your love, I will never more be sad, but will be happy ever, even as you are.”

As he spoke, he took the little dimpled hand in his, and if Edith thought this a sin, she just let herself sin. She knew Raymond loved her, and felt assured it was impossible for Raymond Felix to be a flirt. Yes, she knew furthermore, she loved him, and oh, how happy she was she could never, never tell.

“He loves me!”

The old boat blew shrilly, for it was now time for the picnic party to return home. Edith and Raymond had forgotten they lived on earth, and now to come back to the world and mix and mingle with common humanity was just a little more than they could patiently endure; and then she, sweet girl, imagined every one was gazing upon her, and knew every word that Raymond had said to her. Seeing Genevieve was but to make the blushes come thick and fast in Edith's cheeks. Genevieve glanced significantly first at Edith and then at Raymond. She said nothing, but smiled and looked exceedingly wise. “No one need tell me he has made love to her, their shy tender glances are sufficient tell-—”

tales," and Genevieve appeared to be as happy as the two lovers; yet her joy was a different happiness. But why tell you, reader, you remember only too well the rapturous bliss you felt when first the pure bud of love bloomed in your breast, blinding your eyes with sweet roseate hues; making you to feel, when slain by Cupid's arrows, if this be death how sweet a thing it is to die!

As Edith walked into the boat that evening, she thought, "Good-by, dear old Mount Vernon, this has been the happiest day of all my life; when I am old and forget everything else, this day shall be ever fresh in my memory."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Which way shall I fly,
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell;
And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep,
Still threatening to drown me, opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven.

—*Milton.*

CECIL taking Myrtle in his strong arms as if she were a tiny babe carried her to her own room, and laid her on her bed. "Oh, how mean and degraded I feel. Cursed be the day on which I was born. What evil demon for a moment possessed me to wish to harm her who is as lovely as the angels of heaven? To first gain her trusting love and then evermore to experience her scorn, for I know she will despise me all the remainder of my life. Myrtle, Myrtle, my child, forgive me. Open your sad eyes once more and let me declare to you by all that is pure and holy that I will live a life that even you will say is worthily spent."

As he spoke the frenzied man bathed the white face and hands of the unconscious girl, but it seemed to do no good, for Myrtle continued to murmur in her delirium—

"Shall—I—die? Shall—I—live? Oh, Cecil—Cecil—my brother—brother! Good—brother; no—no—no——!"

And the poor girl gave a heartrending shriek. Cecil felt that he could not endure to hear Myrtle's sad

reproaches longer, so kneeling beside her bed, he buried his face in his hands and moaned in despair:

"Oh, Myrtle, Myrtle, kill me, murder me, do anything you will, only open your eyes once more so that I may tell you the truth."

It was far into the next day; Cecil wished to go for a doctor, yet there was no one with whom he could leave Myrtle—it so happening the servant was sick that morning, and Leita had not yet returned home. "If I leave her, consciousness may return, and she might end her life ere I come back, so I will stay near by her, God helping me."

Patiently Cecil watched by the fair creature's bedside, and the anguish he experienced was no more than he felt he justly deserved. Later on in the day, Myrtle slept more peacefully, and a few moments after, she opened her sad, dark eyes. Cecil could not meet her gaze, try as he would. The poor girl sat up in bed and looked wildly about her, forgetting where she was or what had happened; then suddenly the horrors of the past night flashed vividly across her mind—with a low moan she sank again on her pillow, and incoherent words mingled with heartrending sobs came to Cecil's ear: "Ah—my—Maker, my Creator."

"Myrtle, Myrtle, my child, rest easy I know you hate me—you have a right to do so, but believe me for your own sake when I say you are the same sweet Myrtle you have ever been. Oh, Myrtle, forgive, forgive me, if you can, and forget the words I uttered last night—kill me, dog that I am, but my child, I now humbly plead and implore your forgiveness!"

Myrtle wept and sobbed in her anguish. Cecil wiped her fast flowing tears, but he did not kiss or call her endearing names for fear she would misconstrue his meaning; he only wished to convince her that he had

deeply repented his misdemeanor, and would never again speak as he had once spoken. Yet how he would ever make her believe in him again he did not know.

"Brother Cecil, please leave me, I wish to be alone."

"Myrtle, my child, I know you think I am an intruder, but I am here to watch you that you do nothing rash. If you promise me not to harm yourself, I will go as you have commanded."

"Cecil, do not fear that I will do myself injury, for had I not felt that it was wrong in the sight of God to commit suicide, I, would have been dead ere this day dawned upon my luckless head. Go, leave me, I entreat you!"

Cecil felt words were useless now; that it would take many years to prove to Myrtle his deep contrition; the sad man then arose and left her room. Myrtle on being left alone, gave vent to a fresh flood of grief.

'My Maker, the fearful dream I had! Where shall I flee? There is not one person in the wide, wide world to whom I might go and find comfort—my mother, the one who should have protected me, sent me here, and she would scorn and hate me; and how shall I ever know Cecil told me the truth? I have only his word, and how can I believe him? Oh, my Saviour, my Redeemer, I have tried so hard all my life to do that which was right in Thy sight; why must I endure torture, while others go free. Father, let me die, let me die!"

The poor girl fell on her knees, and poured out her soul to Him who alone can heal the broken-hearted; and then with a sigh that was more akin to a moan, she arose and dressed herself.

As she went before the large mirror to arrange her beautiful hair, she started back—"Is this Myrtle? no—no—Idma, Idma is my name! yet why did not my

Brutus slay me, and thus once for all end my misery?"

Many days passed ere Cecil and Myrtle were again alone; Myrtle having avoided her brother, and Cecil determining not to thrust himself upon one whom he knew despised him; then again he felt "I know now how easily I can do wrong; hence I must be ever watchful lest I fall into sin."

Persons living in the same house are almost sure to be thrown into each other's society sooner or later. Leita, Cecil, and Myrtle were all sitting together in the front yard, when one of the servants called Leita. The wife arose immediately and walked away, leaving Cecil and Myrtle face to face for the first time since their fearful experience. Neither spoke for some time. Cecil wished that Myrtle might break the silence, for he knew not what to say; but she seemed lost in her own meditations. "I know she loathes me." At last he said: "Myrtle, for Heaven's sake do not look as if you were not going to forgive me. 'To err is human; to forgive divine.'"

"Yes, Cecil, but I am not divine; divinity alone can forgive you Cecil. Ask pardon at the throne of grace—let me be—the sooner I die, the better; but if I must live, I ask one favor of you—please persuade my mother to send me to boarding school, for I dare not face my parents from day to day; neither do I think I should remain where your wife is; and you know it is best I should not see you. Hence, if you have any pity whatever in your heart plead with my mother to send me to a boarding school. If I must endure torture, let me be with those that do not know me; and perhaps life can be better borne among new scenes and strange faces. There is no use for me to ask mother to let me go to school, for I have made the request of her many

times, and her answer is ever: 'No, indeed, I wish you to remain ignorant; it is in keeping with your meanness.' But God being my helper, I will endeavor to rise above everything that would drag me downward. My Maker knows that I have ever tried to do that which was right, hence I can still ask His help—if God be for me, who can be against me?"

Myrtle seemed to have forgotten her brother's presence, and talked with herself. Cecil's cheeks burned with shame: "If I could only undo what I have done; but it is too late! too late! Where do you wish to go, Myrtle?"

"I would like to go to Europe, but of course this is impossible. I would go North—somewhere—anywhere—so that I fly where I am not known."

"When do you wish to leave?"

"To-day, if I might get off."

"Myrtle, to go soon is out of the question; you would be obliged to have your clothing made before leaving, and in order to do this, we shall have to return home immediately, which is impossible; I think it is best for you to stay here a few more weeks, and then when we return home, I will persuade your mother to let you go to school."

Cecil thought, "I will prove to her before she leaves that there is still some good in me if I did at one time forget to be a gentleman."

Myrtle replied: "I can only submit to the inevitable, brother Cecil, and abide by the whims of —" Leita coming into the yard at this moment the conversation between brother and sister was abruptly broken off.

Strange as it may appear from this time forth, Cecil became one of the most devoted husbands. Each evening he would come and take his wife for a drive. Deluded woman, she knew not in her joy that she should

thank Myrtle for her happiness. Some days when the wife was very busy, she would insist on Myrtle's going driving with Cecil. Myrtle would tell her sister that she would do her work and let her go, but Leita would never consent to leaving her home duties to another, and Myrtle, unable to find a proper excuse, felt compelled to go driving with Cecil, whom she feared more than death. Myrtle's mental sufferings on these trips were beyond description. She would tremble and her heart beat loudly, for she knew she was miles and miles away from any human soul. It was on these occasions Myrtle would cry: "Brother Cecil, pity—pity, have mercy, only mercy! Oh, my brother, why do you bring me here?"

"Ah! Myrtle, I know you hate and despise me for bringing you here, but I would prove to you, child, that I am still your loving brother," and Cecil would wipe the cold dews from his damp brow.

"Myrtle, why do you tremble? Shall my one mistake never be forgotten?" Cecil's intentions were the purest, but the torture that came to poor Myrtle's soul was indescribable, for that one dreadful night came afresh to her mind every time she was taken upon those desolate drives. "If I can but gain her confidence once more, she will then cease to fear me, and her life will begin to be happy; yet she seems to misconstrue my good intentions, and mortal fear has taken the place of the sweet childish trust she once gave me; but what more can I expect—do I not know 'the way of the transgressor is hard.' Oh God, I feel that this error of mine is going to stare me in the face until my latest day. I would be willing to bear my own remorse if I could only see her happy once more; but those sad eyes of hers almost drive me mad when I know that I have been the cause of their deeper sadness. How she can

assume such cheerfulness in the presence of my wife is a mystery; what a grand actress she would have made, yet I know her acting is no easy task."

Yes, there was a struggle going on in Myrtle's breast; a sorrow which was beyond even Cecil's sight—it took the great eye of God alone to fathom its depths. Myrtle's life seemed to be ebbing away. Her pillow each night was bathed in tears, and often she, walked the floor in sorrow when others were asleep—she the innocent victim of another's wrong. Myrtle well knew if she had not looked to God for help that long ago she would have tried to end her misery in death. How she longed for the days to go by that she might go away to school.

Ulugh having a few weeks holiday thought he would return home where he would be near his brother's grave, so to dear old Florida he had come once more. After the fatigue of travel had somewhat worn away, and he had dusted and refreshed himself, in the cool of the evening he walked toward this cherished spot. Placing sweet flowers upon the low mound, Ulugh stood over that lonely spot, and thought of the happy days gone by never to return—the hunting, the fishing, the boating, the sweet Sabbath days when he had walked hand in hand with brother going to church, but now how changed! Brother sleeps in peace and I am left to mourn. Ah, dear brother to think that you will never, never come back to me! and the poor boy brushed away the fast falling tears as he turned to rest under an old oak tree whose long gray moss seemed ever to wave and weep over Edward's grave.

Ulugh being wrapped in sad meditations saw not the pensive face of a sweet girl near by, for Myrtle when most cast down often came and sat beside Edward's grave, seeming to find some comfort in this lowly

mound; but the young girl wished to-day that she had remained at home, feeling that Ulhugh would prefer being alone with his grief. As the youth approached her, she said: "Please excuse me, I am afraid I am an intruder."

"No, no, how can you speak thus? Whenever I see you, I think of my dear brother, for I met you when first I found him. Do not leave me; sit here and tell me all the news; why, you have been sick? I hardly recognized you." A deep flush came to Myrtle's cheeks. Ulhugh saw the girl's embarrassment, and wondered what it meant.

"Well, Miss Myrtle, tell me the news; are there any 'new comers' for the winter?"

"Not yet; I hear, however, a Mr. Lamont and his mother will be here next week from the North. Mrs. Lamont is well known to some of our best ladies, and all unite in saying she is a most excellent woman. It is said she had an only son who went to the war when quite young, and is considered a brave, true man."

"Yes, and for all I know helped to kill my poor father. Miss Myrtle, when you begin to talk about war, I immediately become excited, for you know father was slain in battle, subsequently mother died of a broken heart, and my brothers and sisters were scattered over the world, I know not where. What a dreadful thing it is to think I might have often passed my own brothers and sisters upon the streets and not recognized them? They know not that I am alive, neither do I know if they are living. Ah, what a horrible thing is war—its tragedies do not end with *men* being killed, this is only the beginning of sadder calamities, for weak women and children are left to suffer want and misery for thirty or more years after the din of the battle ceases. But I do not like to dwell

on this subject, it makes me too sad. To be alone in the world with no one to care whether I live or die, never a kiss from mother or sister, or a 'God bless you, my son' from father, no happy greetings from brothers—these joys all taken from one who could have loved so devotedly. When from day to day I feel such desolations, I become so heart-sick that it takes all the courage I possess to go forward and make a man of myself. But why burden you thus, you can never sympathize with me, for you have too many loved ones on earth to comprehend the feelings of one who is left alone in the world. Banish from your mind what I have said, and tell me something of yourself—have you any plans for another year?"

"Yes, I am thinking of going to boarding school; things have not yet been arranged, but I feel almost certain of going North in a few weeks."

"North! I would not go to school North, if I were you."

"Yes, I prefer going there."

"Shall I not see you for some time?"

"I suppose not, as I expect to be North for several years—until I finish school."

"That is bad, I will not know the place after you are gone, yet I may write to you?"

"I fear I will have to say you 'nay!'"

"What! are you not going to correspond with me—the only person I ever requested to write to me? But I will not ask you the second time."

Ulugh gazed upon the fair, cold girl before him, and thought: "She is rich and has a great influential name, hence she looks down on me as some object of charity, but God being my helper, she shall yet respect me—blockhead that I was to think that she would notice me. She is only kind to me as she is to every

one. I wonder what has come over her? She looks at me as if she hated me; she was ever dignified and sad, yet there is another expression on her face that I am unable to decipher. Surely it cannot be scorn; she could not have changed in so short a time?" and Ulugh, pondering these thoughts in his mind, tipped his hat, leaving Myrtle to her own meditation.

"He would correspond with me, but should I write to him? Let him seek one good and true as himself." At this moment the demon seemed to rise in Myrtle's breast. "Good and true, did I say? Who is good and true? For all I know he wishes to make me love him so that he too may add misery to my already distracted soul. No, the sooner I find out the falseness of human nature the better for me."

As Myrtle pondered, she saw Cecil approaching. How she feared his presence; she wished to flee from his sight, but he was now too near her. "Myrtle, my child, I do not wish to startle you—and why do you tremble—I came only to say Ulugh is here."

"You need not have troubled yourself, I am already aware of the fact."

"I am glad he has come, Myrtle, now you may think less of your trouble; I fear your life will be shortened if you continue to ponder over what has passed. Try to forget all unhappiness—it is the only hope of your life being spared, my child."

"Cecil, fear not; death rarely comes to the threshold of a waiting guest; no, he is not so civil; but, as a grim monster, he would snatch those fair ones that still long for life and happiness. I am here for many a day. Please leave me; is it not enough you have made me miserable; why add unhappiness to my life day after day by your presence?"

"Myrtle, have mercy, child, do you not see I suffer as

much as you? Look into my face; would you recognize me as the same man? Thrust a dagger into my heart and end my life, unless you wish me to live so that I might prove to you if a man sins once there is no reason why he should alway be enthralled by Satan. On my knees I implore your mercy, for you have never told me you forgave me;" and Cecil threw himself at Myrtle's feet.

She gazed upon him with coldness and disdain; his face was haggard and wan, but there was no pity in the girl's dark, flashing eye. "Ah, Cecil, you who taught me to love you as a sister, taught me also to hate you as a viper; and now would you regain my love that you might once more beguile me into sin? I tell you I am no more a child to be deceived by you. Dare I pity you—he that can be false once, can be false twice. You say you suffer—I am tortured. You say you are in anguish—the demons that inhabit the bottomless pit have alone endured my torment; let me pass," and with queenly majesty, yet with sorrow written upon her pale face, Idma, the child of luckless destiny, left Cecil Clair grovelling in the dust crying: "I deserve it all; my punishment is greater than I can bear; ah, I know at last the meaning of poor Byron's words:

"The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree
I planted, they have torn me, and I bleed;
I should have known what fruit would spring
From such seed."

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ From haunted spring and dale,
Edged with popular pale,
The parting genius is with sighing sent.”

—*Milton.*

ULHUGH had been gone only a few days when there arrived in the little village of E—— Mrs. Lamont and her son Lenfred. This elegant lady was quite an addition to the social circle of the place, and as she was already known to some of the best ladies, she was soon introduced to the *élite* of the village. Leita, being one of the first ladies to call, took Mrs. Lamont to her heart with true Southern warmth. She induced her to go boating, driving, fishing, and in a short time the attachment between the two ladies ripened into a deep friendship. It was strange if they did not meet somewhere each day. Leita often invited Mrs. Lamont and her son to dine or take tea with her, and after accepting one of these kind invitations, Mrs. Lamont said to Lenfred: “My son, did you ever see more refinement and elegance? It seems to me everything in that house it in perfect keeping, from the sweet musical voice of the inmates, down to the spotless white linen and shining silverware. I would not take anything for my trip this winter, as it has been my good fortune to enter a typical Southern home. I never could have known what Southern life is, if I had been in a hotel. Truly the women preside in their homes with queenly dignity, while husbands and sons vie with each other in giving

them courtly honor. But talking about queens, did you ever, my son, see a woman more worthy of being called a queen than Miss Dean? Lenfred, I tell you she is the most beautiful object I ever gazed upon; I cannot keep my eyes from her face a second at a time although I know she thinks I am the rudest person she ever saw; and her eyes! I see them now, for they haunt me day and night, yet who can describe them—they seem to draw you, yet repel you; laugh, yet cry, are bright, yet pensive; love you, yet hate you. Her features are as if chiselled; yet you would never take her for a statue, for there is something about her person too divinely realistic. I gaze upon her so intently at times that she turns her face from me and blushes, and then she becomes even more beautiful. A haughty queen she appears to be, yet I feel I do her an injustice when I call her proud. If she were my daughter, I would be the happiest mother in all the land, and if I were a boy, I know she would break my heart.”

“Well mother dear, you have a boy—what do you think will become of him?”

“My son, you certainly have my sympathy, yet for my sake and your own good, do not fall in love with her, for I am afraid she would never reciprocate your affection. I believe a man would have to be *simply perfect* before she could love or even esteem him, and although it will be a long time before she finds her ideal, should she ever see a man whom she truly loves, and should become his wife, her devotion to him would be boundless. No sacrifice would be too great, no burden too heavy, if by her endurance of suffering happiness could be given her husband. A man would want no greater treasure if he could only possess Myrtle as his jewel. But beware, Lenfred, incase your heart in ice, for although she would never turn a straw to

gain any man's love, men cannot keep from loving her, because she is so surpassingly beautiful."

"Mother, if what you say is true, I think we had better take the next train, for I am not prepared for the onslaught of any woman, much less the sweet, seductive wiles of such a fair, fascinating angelic being."

"My boy, I have told you of this lovely woman simply to impress on your mind the old adage 'Forewarned is forearmed.'"

"I will try to take your advice, mother dear, but you must remember I am human and do not expect too much of me; but I did not know you could ever think I would be devoted to any girl as long as I continue to possess the love of the sweetest mother on earth;" and Lenfred bent and kissed that mother whom he had worshipped since babyhood. "My boy, it is but natural that you should try soon to win you a wife, for you have become thoroughly established in your medical profession and have a wide, influential practice and a goodly sum of money in bank and I do not see that you need but one more blessing to make your happiness complete, and that is a good wife."

"I know I have the best mother in all the world, and that is the reason I do not get married, for I am afraid I can never find a wife so noble as you, dear mother, and the dreadful comparison would make me most miserable."

"You are mistaken, my boy; there are many women who will equal your mother in every respect; and you have only to open your eyes when you wish to select a true wife. But, my son, it is growing late, we must not talk more as we wish to go to Silver Springs to-morrow where it is said if you drop a pin in the spring you can see it eighty feet below you as it lies in its crystal bed. We must go and see that wonderful spot—kiss me good-night."

CHAPTER XXV.

“O, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeing meteor, a fast flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passes from life to rest in the grave.”

—*Knox.*

WHEN the winter season had ended in Florida Mrs. Lamont and Leita had become fast friends. Myrtle speaking of going to school in New York, Mrs. Lamont asked her if she knew any one in the city.

“No, madam, I haven’t a single acquaintance there.”

“Why, Myrtle, this is dreadful;” yet after a moment’s thought, the good woman continued. “I am selfish enough to say I am glad you have no friends North, for maybe your mother will consent to your coming to my house. How would you like being a guest of mine, my child?”

“I am sure it is very kind of you to wish to have me in your house, Mrs. Lamont, but I am so dull, I would soon bore you to death. I think I had better board in school where if I make myself a nuisance, the faculty will have no reluctance in expelling me.”

“Ah, if you have no better reason than this, my child, you shall certainly come to my house. I will, however, consult your sister and brother upon the subject; and Mrs. Lamont arose immediately and went into the yard where Leita and Cecil were sitting. After talking a long time on the subject, the good woman ended her conversation by saying: “I just must have her.

She would be such a comfort to me, for Lenfred is absent from home so much, it would be the pleasure of my life to have her in my house. Leita you must certainly fix it with her mother."

"Well, Mrs. Lamont, I think we can arrange everything to suit you. Sister generally grants my every request. Listen furthermore—we leave for home in a few days—I believe I heard you say, you would be here several weeks longer and would then pass through Savannah to meet her cultured people and to see her far famed cemetery, before going North. This is well for our plans, for on my arrival home, I will consult sister in reference to Myrtle, and will immediately write her answer. If sister consents, Myrtle will meet you in Savannah, and you can all sail to New York at the same time."

"Ah, the plan is indeed lovely. I hope it is not too good to be true." Not many days from this time Leita bade Mrs. Lamont good-by, and accompanied by her husband and Myrtle, returned home. It was only necessary for Leita and Cecil to make a request of Mrs. Dean—hence they were not astonished at their sister's answer:

"Certainly, I have no objection at all to your proposed plans."

As soon as Myrtle heard that she was going from home, she commenced immediately to prepare for her trip. The mother did not turn her hands in helping Myrtle arrange her wardrobe for school. Every garment was done by the young girl's own fingers. When night came, Myrtle would be too tired to sleep, and her eyes burned like coals of fire, yet she knew in order to be ready to return home with Mrs. Lamont, she had not a moment to spare; and to add to her discomfiture, Mrs. Dean scolded her day and night. "You need not

think I love you any more because I have consented to your going to school. I never expected to send you to boarding school, preferring you to remain in ignorance, but your sister and brother wished you to go North, and it is only to please them that I grant their request and send you from home; yet I will be glad when you are out of my sight, for I hate to look upon your face. You certainly must have done something dreadful lately, or else why do you go about the house looking down and crying half your time? I suppose you will go North and disgrace the family by making a goose of yourself. I cannot imagine why Cecil should take up his time in begging for your pleasure. The only fault Cecil has is his being too kind to you, but he will find you out after awhile, and hate you as much as I do."

Myrtle listened to her mother's cruel remarks with feelings of delight rather than pain. "Let her scold as much as she pleases. What would she not say if she knew all that has befallen me?" and the poor girl hung her head still lower over her work, never trying for one moment to shield herself from the reproaches heaped upon her by her unfeeling mother.

That Myrtle did not sink under the many trials she had to endure was a positive proof of her strong and beautiful character. Cecil had never been alone with her since their return home. His eyes ever sought hers that he might receive one pitying glance, but no! cold scorn was the only expression he had yet found on the young girl's face. The last day of Myrtle's stay was drawing to a close; her trunk was packed, and she longed to depart; the moments could not fly fast enough—not one regret, not one tear would she shed, and she well knew none would grieve to see her leave. All the family save Myrtle had gone out for a drive, yet she

was indeed glad to be left alone, for it was the only time she ever had any degree of happiness.

The young girl was not by herself, however, for as she was walking in the garden Cecil drew near to her. Myrtle with sadness written on her countenance turned to speak to him: "I thought you had gone for a drive?"

"I did expect to go, Myrtle, but when I remembered this would be my last opportunity of seeing you alone I made some excuse and remained at home."

"And pray why do you wish to see me alone? I did not know the performance of your daily duties necessitated your being in my presence."

"Myrtle, child, please do not talk to me so cuttingly. It might be the last time we are alone for years. You know how bitterly I have repented, are you not going to forgive me? Ah, Myrtle you were once so gentle and forgiving; is it possible, you will never be your true self again?"

Idma did not deign to answer Cecil, but looked on him with cold disdain as much as to say, "Who changed me?" Cecil understood her glance, and his face grew sad.

"Myrtle, as sorry as I am to see you leave, I am glad for your sake you are going, for you will soon forget the past when some handsome boy falls in love with you. In thinking of his devotion you will become once more happy. Ah, God knows, Myrtle, until you find joy and happiness only then will my poor soul rest in peace and comfort. I know you do not believe my words, nevertheless they are all true, my child. When you shall love some good man, you will forget all in the past that has made you so miserable."

"And do you suppose, Cecil, I could ever love any man? You have taught me another lesson—*Hate* and I think I have learned it well."

"You feel so now, Myrtle, but you are too young and beautiful to continue with such unwomanly thoughts. Men will utter their vows of devotion, and, although you may laugh many to scorn, still there will be one person whom you will learn to love, and then your better nature will conquer your hatred of men, and you will become the sweet, gentle, trusting, confiding Myrtle that you were wont to be in childhood days, and how happy I shall be when that day comes.

"That day will never come, Cecil Clair, to Idma Dean! but I hear some one coming—leave me, for I would not be found with you."

Cecil left Myrtle and she saw him no more until the next morning when he came to take her to the train. Mrs. Dean had gone shopping, leaving Myrtle, to get to the depot as best she could and not even did the mother bid the child good-by. "Myrtle, the carriage is ready and if you do not object I will accompany you to the depot and purchase your ticket and check your baggage?"

A short drive brought them to the depot. Cecil helped Myrtle on the train and went to purchase her ticket to Savannah where she was to meet Mrs. Lamont. Minutes passed and Myrtle saw nothing of her brother; the whistle blew, still, Cecil did not come; the train had started when Cecil came running so as to hand Myrtle her ticket through the open window that he had raised just before leaving the car.

"Good-by, Myrtle, may God bless you child, and make you very happy. Forgive—" but before Cecil finished the sentence the train had carried Myrtle beyond the reach of her brother's words. Cecil had remained out of the train for a purpose.

"I know she will not wish to kiss me good-by hence I will not give her any unnecessary pain, so will let

her think I cannot buy her ticket readily or that I am busy in some way with the checking of her trunk."

She divined Cecil's motives in not returning to the train sooner. "Poor man, I believe he has repented," but in another moment a second thought came into her mind. "Ah, my Maker, his repentance does me no good now."

"Tickets! Tickets!"

As Myrtle handed her ticket to the conductor she thought? "Thank God I am going—going anywhere rather than home—a home only in name."

CHAPTER XXVI.

“ A life on the ocean wave!
A home on the rolling deep,
Where the scattered waters rave,
And the winds their revel keep! ”

—*Sargent.*

A DAY after leaving Savannah, where she met her friends, Myrtle perceived she was far from the sight of land, and was now on the bosom of the broad Atlantic. Every way she turned was water, water—only the green water below and the blue sky above; no trees, no land, only that vast trackless waste that now appeared in its momentary calmness to be a smooth sea of glass.

As she lay in her berth that night she thought, “Why am I so sick when every one else on board seems to be perfectly well? The sea is calm, and as far as I can see, there is nothing to cause it. - Cecil,” she continued, as if speaking to him in person, “did you tell me the truth? My God, if he has deceived me!” and the poor girl wrung her hand in misery thinking:

“ Sail on, sail on, thou fearless bark,
Wherever blows the welcome wind
It cannot lead to scenes more dark,
More sad than these we leave behind.”

At midnight the old ship stopped in mid ocean, and there was a heavy tramp, tramp, as if some heavy body was being brought up the stairs leading to the deck. Myrtle closed her eyes, knowing not what it meant. A

dead man's body was brought on deck and placed near the captain, where had already gathered quite a number of the ship's crew. The stars flecked the heavens in their matchless beauty, but no one seemed to notice them, so intent were all on the scene before them. A small lantern was held near the captain that he might see to read the funeral services, thus casting a weird light upon the weatherbeaten and scarred faces of the old sailors. There was a solemn hush; the captain in deep clerical tones read some lines from a prayer book. When he had finished the hearts of all stood still—what next? A large plank with weights attached was brought and on it the body of the dead man was placed. After tying the body on firmly ropes were put under the plank by which to let the body down into the water. With breathless suspense the *finale* was awaited. The body was lifted to the side of the ship; was slowly lowered down, down; when about halfway to the waters' brink the plank gave way and with a horrible heart sickening thud the lifeless body struck the cold deep and sank out of sight. All stood aghast; not a sound could be heard. The sea seemed to have hushed its murmur as it received another luckless victim into her dark bosom. The moon high in the heavens looked down with sad pitying eyes, making the scene even more awesome. No one moved, but every one seemed rooted to the spot. If their hearts did beat, they seemed suddenly to have stopped. Had death overtaken all on board? and as they pondered the old ship began to move slowly but surely on.

Lenfred talked long to Myrtle that night, experiencing the greatest pleasure, as he ever did in her company. "Is the sea not calm to-night? the captain says he has rarely ever known it so peaceful."

"I hope it is not a calm before a storm."

"None of your evil prophesying, Miss Myrtle." But whether prophecy or not, before another day had dawned there was a great storm upon the ocean. The old ship tossed and pitched—now trembling on the crest of a wave, now sinking down with water walled around her, seeming as if she would never rise again. The waves looked like hundreds of snow-capped mountains hurled into the midst of the boiling sea. Those who would try to get on deck would be hurled headlong down the steps while those who were on deck felt as the waves dashed and splashed, that they too would be swept into the troubled sea. The old ship creaked and groaned and was tossed about in the middle of the sea—now forward, now backward, as if the wind had caught a feather and was tossing it hither and thither. The ever watchful captain, eluding the many questions put to him, kept his eye on the boiling billows, while the men looked on in awe and tried to comfort the frightened and screaming women, who would fall at almost every step they took. There was one person on deck, however, who was as nonchalant as the waves themselves. Myrtle sitting on deck in her womanly beauty laughed with glee as the waves dashed at her feet. She was happy in the thought of being washed overboard and thus being freed from her sorrow. "Oh, if He would only take me; no one would miss me; Ul-hugh might, but even he would be glad if he knew all."

It was with difficulty that Lenfred had brought his mother and placed her beside Myrtle; he had noticed her calmness, but then he thought it was in keeping with her nature. She is unlike any creature I ever saw. Mrs. Lamont received no little comfort from Myrtle, who looked as if she were being lulled to sleep; and could have sung with no effort, "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Of all tales 'tis the saddest—and more sad,
Because it makes us smile.—"

—*Byron.*

"I believe it because it is impossible.—"

—*Tertullian.*

MRS. LAMONT lived in an elegant mansion on one of the principal residence streets in the city of New York. The room assigned Myrtle was a large front one—the most beautiful in the house. Owing to its furniture it was called the "blue and white room." The walls were frescoed a pale blue; the fine brussels carpet was the same delicate color, while the furniture was of a pure white and faint blue. The fine lace curtains were looped with blue satin ribbon; the washstand set was of French china with blue forget-me-nots; and everything from picture frames and manicure set to the dainty footstool was in blue and white.

Previous to their arrival, Mrs. Lamont had written to the servants telling them to have the room well aired, flowers in it, and everything in readiness; as a consequence, on the dresser were lilies of the valley and sweet rosebuds. On the table in the center of the room was a superb music box, which must have cost several hundred dollars; and as Mrs. Lamont led Myrtle to her room, it was discoursing some low, sweet music. "Myrtle, my child, welcome, thrice welcome to my home. I have given you this room because it is emblematic of your own purity and loveliness. Never has any one slept in it because I have never before

found one whom I thought it would suit, but when I first saw you, I thought there is one whom I would like to adorn my room. You need not blush, my dear, it is all too true. I do not know which is more beautiful, your extreme modesty or your lovely face. I will leave you now, my child, and should you desire anything just press the electric button for the maid." Mrs. Lamont kissed the fair brow of the beautiful girl and closed the door, leaving Myrtle to her own meditations.

As she was very tired, Myrtle threw herself on the elegant blue lounge, which was fringed with a heavy cord of white silk, and as she rested she thought: "Oh! I wish I deserved all the good she thinks of me."

Myrtle had hardly been at Mrs. Lamont's long enough for her fatigue to wear away when her school opened, which she entered with a full determination to be one of the first in her class. Her companions looked upon her as being far ahead of them; she was polite to all, intimate with none. Teachers and pupils alike were amazed by her calm dignity. Myrtle began taking lessons from one of the greatest masters in the city, and so charmed was he with her voice that he would frequently go over the time allotted her for a lesson. Her voice was naturally so sweet he would often forget that he was giving her a lesson, and almost feel that he was listening to some sweet songster over whom he had no control. Myrtle did not know that Cecil had begged her mother to let her take music lessons, yet felt in her heart that every advantage she had was due to him. Mrs. Lamont was as a ministering angel to the poor heartsick girl, but when one has a burden which no one can share, knowing that to divulge it would be to no advantage, happiness is an impossible thing.

Myrtle felt that all the compliments showered upon

her were but mockery to her tortured soul. Although she had been with Mrs. Lamont but a few months, she felt more at home than she had ever felt in her own mother's house. She received more kindness from Mrs. Lamont in one day than she had from her mother in all her life. God pity the mother! God pity the child! that this should ever be true. Oh, mothers of our Southland; oh, mothers of our Northland, can this be laid at your door? Is it your fault that another has won from you your child's love? Although Myrtle had luxury, ease and the love and esteem of all who knew her, she was yet most miserable. She felt she was living in deception, and it so preyed upon her mind that she was constantly ill, though she never let anyone know she suffered.

On night before going to her room Mrs. Lamont kissed her good-night. "Why, my child, what is the matter? You must have a fever, for your lips are hot and dry." Poor Myrtle said nothing but went to her room, and when she had entered and closed the door she knelt by her bed and sobbed like a child.

"Oh, this awful suspense will turn my head white as cotton. Oh, my Father! my God! which way shall I turn; whither shall I flee? I must know the worst, if worst there be. I can stand it no longer; this very night I shall write to Cecil." Going to her desk she took out paper, pen, and ink, and wrote:

NEW YORK, N. Y., 18—.

"CECIL: I write you to-night because I know not which way to turn. If you have been deceiving me, pity my sorrow and keep the truth from me no longer. Would you keep from me what I have a right to know? I will do myself no harm, nor will I ever again be known to my family but will go far away and make for myself an honest living. I know I have my Maker

on my side, and this is my only consolation. Oh, Cecil! Cecil! Could you know the torture I have endured, you would have repented in sackcloth and ashes; but it is too late, too late; what you have done can never be undone.

"As I write the cold drops are upon my brow. Think not this letter is written in ink. Ah, no! no! would that it were but instead, the very blood of my soul is engraven on each and every letter. Cecil, I know not what I write—I fear I am losing my reason, and why not? Is not my trouble sufficiently great to drive me mad? I will write no more; I know not what to write. I only ask one favor—that you will tell me the truth. It will not kill me—nothing can kill me, or I would have died long before this day. Cecil, Cecil, what am I to do? Oh, help me to hide from this cold, heartless world, my poor, weary, miserable self.

"Fated,
"IDMA."

As Myrtle signed her name she fell back exhausted. "I have written to him at last, but how am I to get the letter to him that none may know anything about it? If the postman takes it to the house and any one should see my handwriting, it might be opened by some member of the family. If I get any one else to direct it for me, Cecil might carelessly throw it aside to await reading at his leisure, and hence it may fall into another's hands. What am I to do? I will pray over the matter, and perhaps by morning I will have contrived some better way than I can now think of."

She then began preparing for bed, but not much sleep visited her eyes that night. Rising early next morning, she was still in a quandary as to how to get the letter off safely. What should she do with it? She had often heard, "Be careful what you write, for it may condemn you when least you expect it." She did not know even where to leave the letter. Heretofore,

she had always placed them on the table, but now she could not. She felt all would know what it contained, and then she knew not but that the maid would read it. "I shall put it in my pocket, but no! in pulling out my handkerchief I might drop it. No, this is not best—what shall I do? It cost me enough to write, but that seems to have been only the beginning of my trouble. Ah, I have it!"—thrusting the fated missive near to her heart she hurried off to school. All that day her heart beat high. Every time she pulled out her handkerchief she imagined the letter was in her pocket. "What if I should drop it and the girls get hold of it? How they would hate me; those who now esteem me."

Two weeks Myrtle carried the letter not knowing what to do with it. Growing desperate one day, she drew the letter from its hiding place, looked quickly here and there and threw it into the mail-box with a great sigh of relief. But relief did not last long, for as the time drew near for Cecil to get the letter, she became very restless, so much so that Lenfred noticing it said to his mother one day:

"Mother, I am a physician, but it does not take a doctor to see that something is on that girl's mind that is simply driving her crazy. Can you not get her to confide in you, mother? I would not have you to think for one moment that I wish you to pry into her affairs, for I know you too well for that, but I think if she would unbosom herself to some friend she might feel better. I have taken her riding; I have taken her to parties; I have done all I could to make her have a pleasant time, and although she is the same sweet, beautiful creature, I can see that she is not thinking of what she is doing, nor of what I am saying; she is living in an entirely different world; she is living one life and acting another. Few persons would notice this, but

maybe I take a little more interest in her than others because she is in the house with us, you know," and Lenfred looked at his mother with a mischievous twinkle in his dark-blue eyes.

"Yes, my boy," and the mother smiled sweetly, "are you not glad for such a plausible excuse for liking her? You need not think I have failed to notice the child was troubled, with all of your liking (and ashamed to own it). I admire her quite as much. As I look at her at times it almost breaks my heart, yet what am I to do? I dare not ask for her confidence; and, furthermore, if she has a sorrow she will bear it alone. But we must surely be mistaken, she is too young to have any care. And her sister told me she was not in love with any one; her father is a man of wealth and influence and high honor, her mother is, I hear, an exceedingly brilliant woman and, of course, she cannot help idolizing Myrtle, so what she can have to worry her is beyond my conjecture. Her sad looks must surely be a part of herself, for she has been so ever since I met her. I hope her sorrow is only imaginary."

"I also wish it might be, mother dear, but if that young girl has not a hidden sorrow my opinion is not worth much henceforth; but here comes the postman, I will see what he has for me." The postman handed Lenfred a letter for Myrtle. "I shall take it to her, mother, for I am always happy to see her get a letter; she must be very lonesome so very far away from home."

Lenfred went to Myrtle's room, knocked gently—"I have a letter for you, Miss Myrtle." Myrtle came to the door, took the letter, looked at it, and as she saw the handwriting she turned her face from Lenfred but not before he saw the crimson come over her lovely face. Lenfred saw her embarrassment and quickly turned away to meet his mother at the foot of the stairs.

“Mother, her sister and brother are surely mistaken. She must be in love with some one, for when I handed her the letter a few minutes ago her face turned a deep red.”

“That is no sign, my child; she blushes when you least expect it. She might have blushed because you saw her in her bedroom; for she has the keenest sense of propriety I ever knew a girl to possess. In fact all of the good qualities of womankind seem to be centered in our beautiful Myrtle—oh, how I love her!”

“W-h-e-w, mother, don’t you think I should get jealous? What would you think of me if I could love just a little too?” and Lenfred turned quickly away to hide his blushes from his mother.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“EVERY WHY HATH A WHEREFORE.”

As soon as Lenfred left Myrtle she locked the door and with fast-beating heart tore open the letter for she knew before opening it that 'twas from Cecil.

“MY POOR LITTLE MYRTLE: Your letter received my child, and you cannot imagine how much pain it gives me to know that you are still in sorrow. But the day will come, and God grant it may come soon, my child, when you will know that what I say is true, and then you will laugh at yourself for having such useless fears. Yet, my child, do not think I have forgotten that I am the cause of all your sorrow; I think of your grief daily, yea hourly, and although I know 'tis only imaginary, yet, you think it is real; for had you known, your heart would not have been so sorely troubled. Your utter ignorance of this wicked world is even more than I had dreamed of. God grant it may ever be thus. Your simplicity is as beautiful as your purity. Myrtle, I feel you would not know me, were you to see me, yet no one save myself is to blame. I realize I have made you miserable. You think I have sinned more than I have; hence I can never be happy and it worries me more than you can ever imagine. Do not think you will be bored with my presence again; knowing I am the cause of your unhappiness, the strain is more than I can bear, for the dreadful past is ever before me. You have never said, Myrtle, that you forgave me, yet I know your good kind heart better than you do yourself; and when it dawns upon you that I have ever told you the truth, you will relent. Oh, Myrtle, when I think of you as a sweet, little, innocent girl resting trustingly and lovingly upon my breast, going to sleep as a tired

bird under its mother's wing; when I think of you thus. Myrtle, the tears roll down my cheeks because I have changed a sister's love and devotion into direst hate. I will send Leita to visit you some day, but I shall not come with her. She is the dearest, sweetest wife in all the world, yet you know I have never merited her love. She often asks me why I am so sad—Alas! what can I tell her? Do not risk writing again, Leita would have read your letter; for she had broken the seal and was about to take it from the envelope when she was called by some one. She never thought of it again. You need not entertain any fears of any one seeing it now, for I destroyed it as soon as I read it, as I hope you will do with this. Mrs. Lamont writes that you are the most lovable creature in all the world. I know she does all in her power to make you happy, and I love her for it. My child, I shall not weary you with longer writing. Holy angels guard and keep you.

“Your brother in deepest sympathy,

“CECIL.”

Myrtle after reading the letter leaned her head in her hands and sobbed as if her heart would break. What made her cry? About what would you have cried had you been in Myrtle's place? No doubt she cried for joy, that her present fears were groundless; and then she thought of the days of “Auld Lang Syne,” when she was a little girl and roamed over the meadows with Cecil; how she had loved and trusted him in her childish innocence. And she thought and thought till her tired brain sought relief in sleep.

She slept long and dreamed she was a little girl again standing by the old lime sink catching fishes, and Cecil was there by her side looking down upon her with a brother's love. But suddenly she thought her mother had come and was scolding her, so she jumped with a start. But it was only the servant knocking on the door calling her to supper. Lenfred was waiting

at the foot of the stairs for her, and noticed her changed expression.

"You have been sleeping, have you not, Miss Myrtle? It must have done you good for you look brighter than you have for days."

"Yes, I have had a nice nap, and I dreamed I was a child again."

"To hear you talk, Miss Myrtle, one would think you were getting quite ancient, but it certainly took more than a nap to make you look so happy, and I think I could guess what 'tis if you would give me permission."

But Lenfred was too much of a gentleman to see Myrtle embarrassed, so he changed the topic of conversation.

He had quite a large practice, and was consequently at home but little; however, that little was the happiest part of his life—so much so, that he grew alarmed at himself. Myrtle's attractions were more than he could resist. While in her presence, he seemed in another world. He was afraid to be with her too much because he might fall in love with her—yes, *might*, too bad—poor man; and as for staying away, could any one human have stayed away when the privilege was his to be in her presence? When, in the dusk of the evening, Lenfred would return home from his office and ask Myrtle to sing—it made no difference how tired or worried he was—he forgot all trouble when her sweet, musical voice was raised, for then he lived in the highest heaven. To hear her sing some songs, one would think she had suffered everything a poor tortured mortal could endure; for her soul seemed made for sympathy.

Soon after this Myrtle was one day running down stairs when from some cause her foot slipped and she fell to the bottom of the steps, her whole weight falling

on her arm. Lenfred and his mother heard the fall and ran out in the hall to see what had happened. "Lenfred, my son, my son, it is Myrtle. Oh, dreadful, dreadful, what shall we do?"

"Oh, my arm, my arm," cried Myrtle in agony, "I believe it is broken," and then she swooned away. Lenfred's calling now was put into practice. Doctor like, he tore the dainty dress from Myrtle's arm. "I will have to take her to her room, mother," and lifting the young girl in his strong arms, as if she were a child, he carried her upstairs to her room and gently placed her on her bed. Putting his head to her breast he was startled, but did not let his mother know his thoughts.

"Oh! I do not like the beating of her heart, it might some day fail her if she ever becomes greatly excited. Strange she should have never mentioned this trouble, yet I doubt if she knows it herself;" then he turned his attention to Myrtle's arm, and examined it carefully.

"Thank God, mother, it is only a sprain; it will be all right soon," and then he thought of how embarrassed she would be should she find him in her room with her arm, and neck bare. "She is coming to, mother;" whereupon Lenfred immediately pulled the counterpane over her fair arms and lily-white neck, and as he did so he could not help noticing a tiny chain to which was attached an exquisite diamond ring that rested near Myrtle's heart. He stood a moment as if turned to stone—he dared not look again, and turning left the room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"To the nuptial bower I led her, blushing like the morn."

—*Milton.*

RAYMOND had visited Baltimore to ask Mr. and Mrs. DeLong for the hand of their daughter Edith. Consent was given to the marriage and Raymond was often seen in the Monumental City. Mr. and Mrs. DeLong soon became proud of their prospective son, feeling in him they were gaining a treasure. As the family was so prominent in social circles, they felt that the wedding should be public, although Edith preferred it should be private. The society element of the old conservative city looked forward to the coming event as one of great brilliancy.

The eventful day was fast approaching. Everything in Edith's home was hurry and confusion; the house was covered from one end to the other with patterns, cloth, laces, embroidery, shoes, hats, handkerchiefs, and everything connected with a trousseau, and the once orderly mansion had come without any one knowing how to look as if a cyclone had suddenly passed through it. Out of so much disorder could order be brought about in so short a time? Yes, for where is the dress-maker or milliner who will not stop everything she is doing to work for a bride elect? Furthermore, all love to do for a bride.

Every stitch the mantuamaker takes is with a smile; the dull days she sews that bread might be had seem at this time to be forgotten, and merriment and joy are

found even in the dismal workroom; for many of these women who sew were once themselves happy brides. and beautiful, too; but—ah, sunshine does not always last! Sad, pitiable fate that sometimes awaits the blushing bride!

Three days before the wedding the florist began decorating the mansion. Large palms, cedars, evergreens, and flowers were brought in great profusion, and arranged in such picturesque and rustic designs that one could almost mistake the mansion for the cool retreat of woodland nymphs; fountains of perfume sparkled and danced, and made low, murmuring music as its rainbow spray fell in pearly dewdrops or gurgled among half-hidden violets on mossy fern beds ere its sweet scented waters came again to kiss the tiny white pebbles that glistened beneath its crystal bed. The spacious halls and large double parlors were thrown together, so as to form one grand reception room, divided only by banks of moss-covered stones that were partly hid by trailing vines and waving grasses. Mounds entirely concealed by luxuriant tropical plants made quaint nooks for whispering lovers, who ever delight to breathe their vows anew to maidens fair. In the center of the spacious parlor was a sylvan bower, intertwined with smilax, maiden-hair fern, and peeping here and there were sweet-scented orange blossoms, tiny snowdrops, single white hyacinths and lilies of the valley. Under this bower of flowers was suspended an umbrella designed of white roses lined with pink petals, on top of which sat two snow-white doves. There was erected in the yard a huge awning extending from the front door to the carriage stile, and a handsome brussels carpet was thrown upon the ground beneath the improvised covering. While these things were being made ready the confectioner was in the elegant

dining room arranging his tables that would please the most fastidious epicure; and to further beautify this department, Mrs. DeLong had brought forth her finest cut glasses, daintiest hand-painted china, and her most elegant silverware, and placed them in the hands of the professional designer.

As the wedding day drew nigh, presents began to come from all parts of America, many from Europe, and some even from the far Orient. The gifts were as varied as they were elegant—handmade Irish laces of finest texture, Indian shawls, Persian rugs, Cologne perfumes, Venetian bronzes, Florentine paintings, Grecian statues, French china, silverware of every description from the gold and silver tea-service to the tiny salt spoons. The jewels consisted of diamonds, pearls, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, cameos, and all wrought in such exquisite designs that even the most fastidious maiden would have pronounced them surpassingly beautiful. The presents continued to come until there was no place left to store them.

Happy Edith saw everything in a kind of dream; she was conscious of nothing save that everything was surpassingly lovely. The evening before the wedding Raymond, accompanied by the attendants, came to practice the wedding march. "Oh, what delight," thought Edith, "to see him. I feel I cannot be happy unless I am in his presence every moment of the day; yet it is too bad I have to meet him in all this crowd;" but, lover like, Raymond soon found a hidden retreat beyond the gaze of watchful eyes.

"Edith, darling, let me have a kiss from your ruby lips, quick, before some of those boys find where we are. Oh, precious, you cannot imagine how happy I am when I remember that in a few short hours you will be my own little bride. It seems I cannot wait for the

time to come—by the bye, that reminds me—I doubt if father can be at our marriage, as urgent business has taken him to New York. Fearing his inability to attend our wedding, he has written us a sweet, loving, fatherly letter, and also sent you a beautiful diamond bracelet. I wrote to father expressing my regrets at his not coming; I also sent him your picture, for as we leave for California immediately after our marriage, and shall be gone for some time, I thought father would be impatient to see your likeness, so I thought I would try to spare the picture you had taken for me a few weeks ago, as I shall so soon possess the beautiful original. Why, Edith, darling, crying! on the eve of your wedding day—surely you love me, precious, my only love? Are you disappointed in me? Do you fear to go with Raymond through life? At the last moment, do you regret the step you are about to take? Oh, Edith, Edith, my darling, my all, do you doubt my love? Speak, my angel, ere my poor heart breaks because of your tears.”

He clasped the sobbing girl to his throbbing breast, and showered fond kisses upon her fair young forehead.

“No, Raymond, I do not doubt your devotion for me, and you know I love you even to madness; yet a dreadful fear has suddenly taken possession of me. I do not believe we are going to marry, for something as plain as words seems to whisper to me, “You will never be Raymond’s wife!”

“Why, Edith, my darling, how can you think thus? In a few short hours you will be mine forever. I also once thought to possess you was too good to be true, but, darling, God be praised, that day is passed—my highest hopes are about to be realized, and I would now be the happiest man alive if it were not for my darling’s tears, for how can I be joyous when I see my

precious in sorrow. Cheer up, my love, if any one were to see you weeping, he would declare you had at the last moment found me a brute."

"The idea of any one thinking evil of you, Raymond; if so, he had better keep his thoughts to himself," and Edith laughed through her tears. "I am ashamed of myself for crying, yet I could not help weeping, and as a woman's tears always seem to make her feel better, I hope my fears will now leave me. Strange I so naturally bring to you my sorrows as well as my joys—I have begun quite early, have I not?"

"No, my darling, I appreciate your confidence, and whether you be in sadness or gladness I hope you will ever come to me, for my arms are ever open to receive you, love, my heart full of devotion; a love that can never be quenched as long as I have your sweet face to feed upon." The dark violet eyes, so much like her mother's—in fact Edith was Mrs. Waldo's image—met the earnest gaze of Raymond—"Edith, you look to-day as you did when I first saw you at the little graveyard scattering flowers o'er that low mound."

"I was quite young then, and must have appeared very sad, for I remember feeling so sorry for that poor woman. What was her name? I have always wished to know more of her history, but when I would question mother she would evade answering me, and immediately turn the conversation to other topics. There must have been some mystery about the poor woman that mother thought best to be kept from a child, but now that I am soon to be married I suppose I am old enough to be intrusted with a secret, although my parents seem to look upon me as a little girl—for they pet me now just as they did when I was a baby. It was only yesterday mother and father said, with tears in their eyes—"My little girl, what will home be without

our sweet Edith?" I did not think I would ever love any man so devotedly as that he could persuade me to leave mother and father; yet here I am loving you more than I do my own precious parents. Oh, Raymond, I am really ashamed of myself," and the beautiful girl pouted her cherry lips and glanced up with a saucy twinkle in her deep-blue eyes. How often Edith as a baby had worn that same winning expression, the same look which had made her own father catch her up tenderly in his loving arms, kissing many times the rosy dimpled cheeks—calling her his "little mischief."

"Edith, my darling, your shame is my glory—God grant your love for me may ever continue pure and sweet as it now is; but, angel, what makes you look so beautiful? I always thought you pretty, yet you are surpassingly beautiful at this moment—you need not blush, you know I speak the truth. Listen, there is the wedding march—we are wanted—stop, darling, you are my prisoner until I get a sweet k—" But no, some one had already come to call them.

"I say, Edith," said Genevieve, "you and Raymond are the biggest— Oh! what must I call you? Do you not know you will soon be married, that is if you can ever stop kissing long enough for the preacher to perform the ceremony, and then you can make love to your hearts' content? But I doubt if you will ever make a fuss over each other then; it will be a pity to think you exhausted all the love before your wedding day. All this foolishness beforehand is why folks do not love after——"

"Oh, Gen, please do not fuss with me now, you do not seem to respect my position," and Edith wound her arms tenderly about her companion's waist.

"Don't be caressing me, when you have some respect for yourself, you may then instil it in others."

The old city clock had tolled midnight ere the march had been practiced to perfection, for there was more merrymaking than marching done. The joyous bridal party had now repaired to their respective rooms, after which a momentary lull seemed to settle over the old mansion, and the stars came out one by one to keep silent watch over the fair betrothed as she dreamed of the happy morrow, when she would be Raymond's bonnie bride.

Early next morning—the wedding day! the usual confusion on such eventful occasions reigned supreme. The confectioner and florist were rivaling each other in their efforts to display only the beautiful for this joyous wedding, and as the day advanced many things had to be completed that could not receive the finishing touches until the last moment. Grandfather's clock seemed to tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock faster than its usual wont as if to hasten the happy nuptial hour.

Edith had begun dressing, yet became very nervous when she thought of the many eyes that would so soon be riveted upon her. "Yet, I can stand the gaze of my guests and endure even greater discomfiture for his sake—yes, for the love I bear him I would face a multitude."

At this moment there was a gentle tap on Edith's door, and the maid handed her a small package accompanied by a note from the groom. Edith hastily tore open the envelope—a missive at this hour from any one besides her lover might have waited.

"MY OWN DARLING EDITH: I send you a necklace of pearls, which seems in keeping with your own sweet purity and loveliness of being. I intended giving you this little memento of my love last night, but in your presence, darling, I forgot everything, except your own

sweet self. I desire, love, if perfectly agreeable to your wishes, that my beautiful betrothed wear my gift to the marriage altar—until then God keep my precious Edith.

“Your own till death—

RAYMOND.”

Edith kissed the note fondly and took the jeweled necklace and put it about her snowy neck. Surely if Raymond could have seen the beauty of that swan, white throat, he would not have had it hid even with his lovely gift. “Oh, I know he is the dearest, sweetest boy in all the world and everything he does is right, yet I almost wish he had not given me *pearls*, for I have heard it was bad luck to give a bride pearls. But it is too late now, and how Raymond would laugh at my superstition, so I shall never tell him my fears for he might possibly think I did not appreciate his present, and I hold dearer a feather given by him than I would value a diamond given by any other man. I must hasten my wedding toilet, for I think I hear the musicians tuning their instruments. Oh, in a few short minutes I shall be his own little bride. I know I shall be the happiest girl in all the world—ah, Raymond, Raymond, I love you to madness; without you I could not exist.”

And the fair face beamed with joyous anticipations of the happiness in store for her.

The beautiful wedding gown was donned with the assistance of mother and Genevieve—how lovely the fair bride looked in her snowy silk and long flowing white veil caught with lilies of the valley—Edith’s favorite flower. The guests were beginning to arrive, and Edith could hear the low buzz, as the sound of many voices floated down the long hall to her room door, a few moments later came the attendants, dressed

in fairy-like costumes, followed by the little flower girls, who in their loveliness looked like angels fluttering about the old mansion. Last of all came the white headed clergyman, the dear old man of God, who sat apart from the guests with his eyes intently fixed upon the floor. "Ah, will life end as happily for this young couple as it has begun? Who can tell what sorrow awaits them beyond the sacred union of their hearts," and the good man heaved a deep sigh.

Raymond had now arrived, and Edith had sent for him, and when the handsome groom was alone with his beautiful bride, he fell at her feet: "My darling, am I indeed looking at my Edith? An angel of light you are, with your shining golden hair and soft blue eyes. Oh, Edith, Edith, I am not half worthy of you, my darling. But rather are you suited to be crowned the Goddess of Love and Beauty."

"No, no, dear Raymond, I would prefer being your own 'little bride.' What greater happiness on earth could I desire than to be your wife?" Raymond caught his betrothed's hands and kissed them fervently. "God bless you ever, my darling, for those sweet words, may I never give you cause to retract what you have just said; and God grant our love for each other may deepen as the years roll by."

The beautiful bride on beholding her handsome lover kneeling at her feet was greatly moved; regardless of her fleecy veil and spotless gown, she knelt softly by the side of her intended.

"Raymond I would not have you kneel to me, but instead let us both kneel to our Father in heaven. Pray God's blessings upon us, dear Raymond, for I feel in this—the happiest hour of my life—I wish His presence very near to us." And that fair young bride in all her womanly loveliness and that manly groom

holding the tiny gloved hand of his betrothed; his dark hair, and eyes deeper than night, knelt together, making a picture so sweet that even the seraphs in heaven would fain have ceased their celestial songs to have bent a listening ear to Raymond's prayer that floated like sweet incense to the throne of God, as in his deep, melodious voice he petitioned the great Jehovah:

"Heavenly Father, we have come to Thy throne of love with our joys, and for this—the happiest day of our existence—we thank Thee. We bless and give Thee praise. Father, although to-day is bright, we know not what shadows in the future await us; and we beseech Thee now, merciful Father, that when dark clouds pass over our sunny pathway, we may look to Thee in our hours of deepest distress, lean upon Thee, knowing Thou doest all things well. And oh, heavenly Father, if trouble must come, grant, I beseech Thee, that I bear the anguish, and let not my beloved betrothed know pain or sorrow; but, if it be Thy will, cast all burdens on me, for I am strong while she is but a fair, frail flower that blooms only to give joy and sunshine to all about her. And now, O Father, take us and guide us in life with all of its many mysterious changes, and at last lead us gently to Thy peaceful home of love where there is peace, joy, gladness and love through Jesus Christ, our precious Saviour forever and ever—Amen."

As Raymond arose, he gently lifted his bride and clasped her fondly to his throbbing breast. "My darling, you can never know how precious you have become to me. Hark, I hear the clock striking our bridal hour. In a few short moments you will be my own sweet wife—let me kiss you once again, my darling. In days to come you will love to think on these happy golden seconds." He stooped and kissed fervently his blush-

ing bride. "God bless you, my angel," and Raymond led Edith in the hall where the attendants awaited the lovely bride and handsome groom.

So soon as the sweet tones of the wedding march were heard by the man of God, he began to walk with solemn step toward the beautiful floral arbor where he was met by the attendants, who were followed by little flower girls scattering sweet rose petals between Raymond and Edith. It was a curious sight never seen before—bride and groom coming in alone and separated from each other by angel-like forms, who glided over flowers strewn by childhood's sweet fingers, while the perfumed fountains filled the air with their sweet-scented spray, and the tall candelabra's waxen tapers throwing a mellow glow o'er that fairy-like scene. Edith drew near to Raymond and placed her arm in his with childlike trust and confidence, and as she stood with holy reverence before the man of God to be made the wife of Raymond Felix, her face became radiant with expectant joy and happiness, and it was whispered, "Oh, how like an angel; was ever an earthly being so surpassingly beautiful?" Then followed a subdued hush ere was heard in solemn tones the man of God:

"In the beautiful garden of Eden——"

"Stop, stop!"

"Were first united loving——"

"Stop, stop!"

A death-like silence ensued, save the excited cry of one individual—

"Stop, stop!"

What could it mean? "Stop, stop, it cannot be," and there rushed in the midst of all this fair wedding scene a man whom all mistook for a maniac, for he ran to the bride and staring eagerly in her face fell back

crying incoherently: "It is only too true; it cannot be; it is she; it is Viola's child; the same dark-blue eyes—the same golden hair as her mother! Ah, war, war, may thy dark, cruel cloud never again gather over our fair land. Was it not enough to kill the father and make the mother die of a broken heart? No, no, but we must now have the horrible wrecking of brother and sister—Stop! stop, in God's holy name, stop, stop!" and the poor old man fell back exhausted in a chair refusing to be comforted in his great grief.

CHAPTER XXX.

“ Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eyes,
In every gesture dignity and love.”

—*Milton.*

THREE years have passed since we last saw Ulhugh. The sturdy youth has grown into noble, sober manhood, and having been thrown during the years of his college life into the society of the most polished ladies and gentlemen in the city of R—, he had become easy and elegant in his bearing. He had taken the highest honors in his class, and at the same time had borne away something far better—the love and respect of schoolmates and teachers, together with the great esteem of many persons living in the city, not to mention the girls that were dead in love with him, who numbered more than a score. Do not think Ulhugh gave to young ladies any special reason for their devotions. He was ever polite to all the fair sex, but some girls are similar to some boys in that they love even when their affections are unreciprocated. Ulhugh never thought of loving but one girl—Myrtle was his first and only affection, his ideal love, and how he longed once more to see her pure, sweet face, and gaze into those soft, tender, wondrously sad dark eyes of hers that seemed to speak to his innermost soul.

“Has she forgotten me? What has she done with my ring? Ah, more than all, has she fallen in love with any man since I saw her?” And at this thought the poor boy’s heart seemed to sink in his bosom with a deep, heavy thud.

"I must see her, and tell her of my devotion to her, which has increased as the days, months, and years have dragged slowly by. "Did ever man love a woman as I do her? No, for there never lived another woman just like her to love. She has been to me a guiding star beckoning me to better and nobler deeds in life. For her sake I would gladly climb the topmost ladder of fame, that I might be the more worthy of her. I will return to Florida, and pour out all my heart to her. I must know my fate; I cannot longer live in suspense."

While Ullugh was pondering over his future fate, where was Myrtle? She was still in New York, and it was commencement night at her school. The sweet girl was adorned in a simple, spotless white mull, and her dark, glowing eyes had a far-away look in them. Was she happy as were her companions? No, for they had expressed their joy at the near close of school, and had slammed their books down on their desks dancing for joy. "No more old school; we will soon be at home with dear mother and father—home, sweet home—yes, be it ever so humble, there is no place like home—the dearest spot in all the world."

But never had any one heard Myrtle say she wished to return home, and that is why the young girl looked so sad to-night. She knew on to-morrow she would have to leave for a place that was home only in name. Furthermore, she had to sing in a few moments, and always extremely modest, her heart beat quick and fast.

"How can I stand alone and face this vast audience?"

When at last the president called her name, she was welcomed with a round of applause. Idna bowed with queenly dignity, still no joy was shown in her countenance for the great esteem of the outside world.

Her sad face was as white as her dress, and her dark hair appeared even more dark as it lay in thick coils above her snowy neck. As Idma stood :

“ Ne’er did Greeian chisel trace
A Nymph, a Naiad, or a Grace,
Of finer form, or lovelier face.”

Her lustrous eyes seemed almost divine, and persons in the audience as they gazed upon her whispered: “What heavenly beauty!” Idma, waiting for her teacher to play the prelude to her accompaniment, accidentally heard a gentleman remark to his friend—“She is the most beautiful creature I ever saw on earth, and I know she is as lovely in character as she is fair.” Myrtle heard no more, but the words she caught were sufficient to make her pale cheeks turn scarlet.

“Will the past never forsake me?” and with a will power that was almost superhuman, Idma hurled her thoughts back into the inner recesses of her sad breast. A few minutes later, she began singing a song that seemed in unison with her own troubled soul:

“ ’Tis the last rose of summer,
Left blooming alone;
All her lovely companions
Are faded and gone;
No flower of her kindred,
No rose bud is nigh,
To reflect back her blushes,
Or give sigh for sigh.
“ I’ll not leave thee, thou lone one,
To pine on the stem;
Since the lovely are sleeping,
Go sleep thou with them.
Thus kindly I scatter,
Thy leaves o’er the bed,
Where thy mates of the garden
Lie scentless and dead.”

From the first note of Myrtle's clear, melodious voice every sound in that great hall became hushed—on, on the young girl sang, forgetting the sea of faces turned toward her; living only in her song and thinking she was a child again roaming in the woods beside the old lime sink—singing her sad lament to the birds and fishes. Was this a human being that gave forth such rapturous sounds? Men and women rose unconsciously to their feet and gazed upon the beautiful woman before them with wonder and awe, for she had stirred chords in their souls that had long since slept dormant, but now were suddenly revibrating on hearing music that seemed to come from the far-away home of the blessed. Each and every one leaned forward in order not to lose a single note.

“ So soon may I follow,
When friendships decay,
And from love's shining circle
The gems drop away.
When true hearts lie withered,
And fond ones are flown,
Oh! who would inhabit
This bleak world alone!

The spell deepened as the song continued; every person in the house ceased to breathe and remained in breathless suspense ere the last words of the wondrous melody died away and was heard no more. After the lovely songstress took her seat on the rostrum there ensued an awful pause—men and women wept and sobbed in perfect obliviousness of their joyous surroundings—then becoming suddenly cognizant of their whereabouts, the painful silence was broken by one continuous applause in order to make their fair singer come again in song before the footlights. But all was useless, the lovely Idma could not be prevailed to

sing again—with queenly dignity that spoke louder than words she bowed herself from the stage.

“Ah, how little they imagine my heart would break were I to sing another note to-night. Oh, the horrible pains that shot through my heart.”

A few minutes later, Idma received a star medal—the highest reward that had ever been given in her school.

After the exercises were over nearly every man and woman pressed forward to get an introduction to this Southern genius and divine beauty, who was now surrounded in a bed of floral offerings sent by numerous friends throughout the city. Myrtle’s hand rested upon a floral harp presented by Lenfred. She received the many compliments showered upon her with a subdued grace, which made one young man whisper to some chum near by: “If I could get a smile from her, I would be willing to work a year, but where is the man she would turn to look on? Boys, we had better stay clear—she is too grand for us; she is the only woman I ever saw that I thought would make a suitable queen. She had better never go to Europe, people would make her queen as sure as life.”

As soon as Myrtle had an opportunity of speaking to Lenfred, she requested him to please take her home. “Why, surely not yet, Miss Myrtle, scores of persons are waiting to be introduced to you.”

“If you wish to make me happy, Mr. Lamont, please grant my request.”

“But you cannot get out the door, Miss Myrtle, every one will crowd about you.”

“Yes, follow me, we shall leave through the side entrance.”

Lenfred, ever willing to do Myrtle’s bidding, at once obeyed her command. How proud he was to think he

had the privilege of escorting her home; how happy he was to think in a few short weeks he could ask her to be his bride. "My bride? what presumption! Will she ever love me? True she has been kind to me. But this is in keeping with her sweet nature, for every menial gets as much kindness from her as the finest lady.

As Lenfred rode home with his fair charge that night, he was somewhat puzzled. "Miss Myrtle, you are so different from all other women I have met; for all my acquaintances among the ladies esteem the admiration of the world, while you seem perfectly indifferent, and even worried at the demonstration and applause of mankind, although I am sure no one is more worthy of honor than yourself."

As Lenfred and Myrtle continued to talk, the moonbeams stole into the carriage and playfully kissed Myrtle's tiny white hands, which intrusion seemed to madden Lenfred, and made him feel that he would give the world if at that moment he might enfold the lovely girl to his throbbing breast and pour out the deep love of his soul. "Oh, if I could tell her of my love, or even for one second hold her hand in mine; yet I had rather have my arm severed from my body than to do such a thing, for I know no man has ever stepped over the bounds of passing courtesy with Myrtle Dean. She is a woman with whom men never think of flirting—they have only two thoughts when looking into her pure face—either she is too good for me, or can I by perfect living ever hope to win her as my wife."

When Myrtle returned to Mrs. Lamont's that night the good woman kissed and congratulated her fair *protégé*, after which the young girl ran to her room and falling upon her bed wept as if her heart would break. Another girl would have danced for joy on receiving a

star medal. But such was not true in poor Myrtle's case—"what do I care for all this show—my mother's love would be more precious to me than all the honor of the outside world. Must I indeed return home to-morrow? and shall I be obliged to be thrown with Cecil once more? Oh, what if his old love for me should return? Yet where else can I go? Home, yes home—no there is no home on earth for Idma Dean," and the poor girl buried her head in her pillow and sobbed herself to sleep in her commencement robe.

It was late in the morning when Myrtle awoke.

That same day she returned home. It was with deepest regret Mrs. Lamont parted from her young charge. Myrtle kissed her hostess fondly many times.

"Mrs. Lamont, you can never know how much I appreciate your kindness. I never forget a favor shown me, yet what can I ever do that would in any degree prove my love and gratitude to you?"

"My sweet child, hush—the pleasure of your stay at my home has all been reserved for me, and I would gladly keep you always. Myrtle, how I envy your mother. To have you for my own daughter, child, I would ask no greater blessing."

Lenfred was standing near, and when Myrtle met his earnest gaze her face suddenly crimsoned. Mrs. Lamont, on seeing the sweet girl's cheeks flush, became aware of making a mistake, although she knew she would have said the same words had she never known a son's love. The good woman felt, however, to excuse her thoughtlessness would make things worse, hence she only kissed Myrtle more affectionately as she bade her a tearful good-by.

A moment later Lenfred and Myrtle were in a carriage on their way to the depot; neither seemed inclined to speak, for Myrtle was sad and Lenfred's

soul was too full of ardent love for idle, commonplace words. As the noble-hearted man helped the lovely girl from the carriage, did he hold her tiny hand a second longer and press it with more warmth than usual? Did he?

So excited had Lenfred become, he was thoroughly unconscious of strangers passing by and smiling—perhaps if they had been questioned, they would have replied: "That man is certainly madly in love with that girl; but who could censure him for it? Her beauty is certainly enough to craze any person."

"Miss Myrtle," and Lenfred's voice grew tremulous, "I am sorry to have you leave us; you certainly brought joy and happiness to our home, and I hope it will not be long before you return to make mother a visit. You must not forget our home is ever open to the sweet Southern singer, yes, you will always have true and hearty welcome at our home."

It was not what Lenfred said but what his deep blue eyes and his tender accent bespoke, that made Myrtle cast her long, dark eyelids down, for she knew his searching gaze was riveted upon her face. Love is often felt even when no words of affection have been spoken.

"Good-by, Miss Myrtle, in a few short weeks I shall bring mother to Florida, and we shall both see you again, and then I——"

"Please get off the train, Mr. Lamont, I will listen to nothing now, I am so afraid you will get hurt—do you not see how fast the cars are moving?"

Lenfred intended saying: "I wish you to decide, Miss Myrtle, my happiness or misery in life." Myrtle felt by Lenfred's deep, low tone that he expected to speak to her words of great moment to himself, and as she did not love him, only holding him in the highest

esteem, she wished to retain his friendship. She knew if he once made love to her, and she rejected him. ever afterward there would be a certain estrangement between them. Oh, how glad she was when the train commenced to roll away from the depot, which gave her an excuse for uttering the words she had spoken to Lenfred. As the train rounded a curve near the depot Myrtle saw Lenfred standing alone looking down upon the pavement with dejected expression upon his sad face.

“Ah, me, so gentle, so kind, but no love—no love—yet God grant I am mistaken in my views. There must be some hope—oh, fair woman, why did I ever meet you? Know you not that you hold the destiny of my life in your tiny white hands? For all my love, will you say me ‘nay?’” and then Lenfred turned and walked with a sad heart homeward, wondering if it were possible to persuade this lovely songstress of the fair South to warble her sweet bird notes far away from her bright sunny clime.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“ Shall I not take my ease in mine inn ?”

—*Shakespeare.*

ON Myrtle's return home Mrs. Dean did not so much as look up as her daughter kissed her. No smile of joy, no kind welcome, no demonstrations of love did she give her daughter, but instead the mother looked with coldness upon her as she said: “I suppose you think you are grown, now that you have come back here with all of your New York airs, but I tell you in the beginning you are in my eyes the same as when you left, and you know that is not much. I am sorry you have come back. I wish you had stayed off forever, for I am sure I do not want to see you; but I will dismiss some of my servants and let you do their work, and in this way maybe I can get some good out of you. I am determined that you shall never have any pleasure in my house so long as you live. I wish that you were dead, but people of whom you wish to rid yourself never do die.”

Poor Myrtle did not say a word—but tried hard to keep back the tears.

“And is this the welcome a daughter receives from her mother after having been separated for years?”

Leita coming up at this moment, kissed her sister affectionately: “Myrtle, I am very glad you have come home; maybe you can cheer my poor husband. He has been sick a long time, and for the past two weeks he has been a great deal worse. Go and see

him; I will come in a few minutes—as soon as I can boil him some milk.”

Myrtle knew she would have to meet Cecil, so thought she had as well get through with the dreadful ordeal. Going to Cecil's door, she knocked gently.

“Come in.”

It was the same voice, only more feeble, that she had loved so well as a child. With beating heart she turned the knob and stood just within the doorway; what did she see? A form with pale face, sunken cheeks, and hollow eyes. Was this Cecil—the handsome Cecil Clair, whom she had known some few years ago? It was evident that he had suffered, but had he suffered as much as she? Both looked at each other; each waited for the other to speak, yet neither said a word. The silence had grown painful, and Myrtle cast her gaze downward with a saddened, troubled expression on her pure face. Cecil observing her embarrassment tried to relieve the awkwardness of the moment: “Myrtle, my child, you have a welcome home. I am sorry I could not meet you at the depot, yet I hope it is all for the best. I suppose you would rather see me in this condition than any other, unless as a corpse; but come nearer, my child, my voice is too weak to speak at such a distance. You need not be afraid of me now, for I am only a shadow of my former self.”

Myrtle did as she was requested, and came near the large invalid chair in which her brother was seated.

“Myrtle,” he continued, “I do not ask you to kiss me; I do not ask you to shake hands with me, but I do ask you to speak to me. For three long years I have not heard your voice, speak to me, my child. Carry me back once more to those happy days when you were a little girl.”

“I do not know that I can do that, brother Cecil, but I am indeed sorry to come home and find you sick.”

"Your sympathy is in keeping with your childhood days. Myrtle, I thank you, yet I am glad I am sick, and when I—" then he coughed violently ere he could speak again. "Myrtle, you will be happy soon, my child."

She did not ask him what he meant, for his pale face told the sad story. The bitterness that had been in Myrtle's heart all these years seemed to have given place to pity as she gazed upon his emaciated form; for she knew he had changed. "You have come back at last, Myrtle. I am very glad, for I thought I should never see you again, but I thank God I can once more gaze into your pure sweet face. I wished to see if you had changed—yes, you have, but not as much as I; you can yet be happy."

He seemed to be talking to himself in a delirious way, and when he had finished he fell back exhausted in his chair.

"Let me call sister Leita! possibly she can give you something to ease you?"

"No, no, I will be all right in a few minutes—don't bother her. Poor woman, how faithful she has been since I have been sick. God never gave better wife to so undeserving a husband. She is almost broken down. A lingering sickness is a dreadful thing. I do not mind it so much for myself, but I dislike to see my poor wife going day and night. I know it will break her health, and she is so young and fair I would not see her fade on my account."

"She will not, Cecil, for I will help her nurse you. I believe I am considered a good nurse."

Cecil did not answer Myrtle, his eyes were closed, but she saw a tear steal from under his closed lids and roll down his haggard face. Poor man, a kind word from one he thought despised him had melted his

heart. "Will she indeed nurse me after I have given her so much sorrow? Ah, she is the Myrtle I once knew—the same kind heart, same angelic Myrtle. She sees at last that I have tried to live a better life, and that I shall soon die of remorse. Although her sorrow has been very great it has been nothing like mine, for mine is slowly but surely taking me to my grave, while she can yet live and be happy.

In the days and nights that followed Myrtle relieved Leita a great deal by helping her nurse Cecil. Neither she nor Cecil had spoken of the bygone days, and it seemed buried forever in the past. Never was there a word or look that each would not have been willing for the world to have seen and heard. But, the thoughts that came to each of them! You can bury words and actions, but who can bury thoughts? The very effort you make to smother them only brings sad memories more vividly to your mind.

It was with no little self control that Myrtle attended Cecil. Her face was often sad as her mind reflected upon other days, and she at times even grew angry with herself. When Cecil would see this sadness, which she strove so hard to hide, he would turn his head and heave a deep sigh: "Poor child, although she is good enough not to speak harshly yet I know she has never forgotten that dreadful night, and she continually heaps coals of fire upon my head."

"Myrtle," said Leita one day, "I am so glad you have come home, for I wanted to take Cecil to Florida, but was afraid as I had no one to help me nurse him. Now that you have returned I know you will go with me—won't you? I know your mother does not care."

"Why, certainly I will go, sister Leita, especially if I can be of any service to you."

Preparations were immediately made, and in a few

weeks we find them all in Florida. Ulhugh had preceded them, and was waiting with no little impatience Myrtle's arrival; and when he saw her he was happy beyond measure. Now he could tell her of his love for her, but he would wait for a good opportunity lest he should shock her, or appear rude.

Although Myrtle loved no one living, she was always happy when in Ulhugh's presence; she was glad when he came and sorry when he left. His manliness and trueness stamped him as no ordinary man. He was the handsomest man she had ever met, but this had very little or no weight with her. The best-looking man in the world would have been as the ugliest if he intended his personal appearance to carry him through life. Ulhugh was now cultured, refined, exceedingly entertaining, and his dark, flashing eyes were sufficient to make any girl fall in love.

Day after day he met Myrtle, at the same time his love becoming deeper and deeper till it had grown almost to idolatry. Myrtle's indifference had changed to interest; and from interest to friendship; and from friendship to sisterly love, which was fine progress for one like Myrtle Dean.

Cecil had improved greatly and was able to walk about the yard, consequently Myrtle was freed from nursing him and could do very much as she pleased.

"Miss Myrtle," said Ulhugh one day, "we are getting up a party to go to St. Augustine, and we would be delighted to have you go if you care to."

"I know of nothing to prevent, Mr. Waldo, I am sure I would like very much to go."

"Thank you. I know I will have a good time now since you are going."

"I am not so certain that I can make you happy—I rarely do."

"Don't you? Well, you do, even if you are unconscious of it."

Two days later, we find the party in St. Augustine—the oldest city in the United States. What a quaint town it is, with the old fort and Spanish houses scattered here and there. A few minutes' drive brought Myrtle and Ulhugh in front of the far-famed Ponce de Leon.

"Oh, Ulhugh," cried Myrtle, "I have often dreamed of fairyland, but never thought I would see one in reality; to think it is the month of January, yet the flowers are blooming and the birds singing just as they would in the sweet May time; and these quaint-looking plants almost lead me to believe I am in the tropics."

Myrtle further noticed elegant ladies with flashing diamonds, dressed in white silk, and wearing white satin or kid shoes, while handsome men sat near holding white parasols over these fair creatures.

As Myrtle saw the beautiful flowers and heard the crystal fountains splashing and making the little gold fish dart here and there in their liquid beds, a spell seemed to take possession of her, and she felt she would fain live forever in this enchanted garden.

"Let us see the parlor, Miss Myrtle," and Ulhugh led the way into this room of regal splendor; for the mantelpiece, with its clock, is itself a thing of beauty which you may study for days without seeing all its intricate carvings. The tread of feet is never heard as you walk over the heavy plush carpets, and the divans, *tête-à-tête* and everything about the apartment, even to the pictures upon the walls, would have suggested to the mind of a sultan an Eastern harem, for sweet idleness and *ennui* take possession of you, so that it is impossible to shake off your dreaminess; and as you sink down on the low, soft lounge, you forget all care. Yes,

as the soft, sweet music, the warbling notes of mocking birds, the murmur of crystal fountains, the perfumed orange blossoms, come stealing in through the tapestry door, which is ever and anon blown aside by sweet zephyrs, you just forget you are on earth, and feel you are in the land where Fairies and Cupids dwell, for you dream of love, think of love, and talk of love.

Hence do you wonder that Ullugh should have whispered love to the "star-eyed" Idna? Ullugh and Myrtle sat beneath a window facing a beautiful garden, which they had not before this time observed, for the inn appeared to be built in the midst of a somewhat circular flower garden. Thus Ullugh saw things that day; whether he was accurate he cared not. He only knew he was in love, and hence looked at the world through lover's lens. Into a retreat, hidden from the careless gaze by heavy, flowing drapery and having a window from which could be viewed a lovely garden, Myrtle and Ullugh sat thinking; or rather the beautiful girl was dreaming, for as she watched the tiny humming birds sipping sweets from every perfumed flower as they darted here and there with a sleepy buzz, her eyes had a far-away, heavenly look in them.

As Ullugh gazed upon that sweet, calm face that had a sadness written upon it which was beyond all description, he wondered if he dare tell her of his love. Oh, how he longed to pour out his soul to the one being whom he had ever loved and trusted. Myrtle appeared to have forgotten any one was near, for not one word had she spoken for five minutes. Ullugh continued to watch her face, which was indeed a study, but failed to fathom her thoughts, for the longer he looked upon her the more puzzled he became. Being unable to longer suppress his love, Ullugh spoke with his manly, characteristic bluntness.

“Miss Myrtle, I wish to know if it is possible for such a fair creature as yourself—one who is pure enough to dwell in heaven—ever to love me?”

Myrtle looked startled, but Ullugh continued: “I do not wonder your dark, sad eyes gaze upon me in amazement, for I know I cannot make love with poetic words. Teach me, beautiful woman, what to say. Long I have striven to keep my devotion buried, knowing I was not half worthy of you. Hence for you I wished to go to school, to equip myself for life’s work. For you I burned the midnight lamp, so that I might be congenial with you in knowledge; for you I have endeavored to make a man of myself, feeling that thus only would I be in keeping with your own highborn nature. I have loved you from the first day I gazed upon you, and I asked you to keep that ring that you might not forget me, for I was then a helpless lad, and am now but a poor man; yet, I love you, Myrtle; and if by striving I can ever hope to win you, I am willing to labor for your happiness and comfort day and night. I suppose I should have become well established in my medical profession ere I told you of my love, but I feared, while waiting, another bearing a greater name might gain your heart, and take you for his own sweet bride, and then would I ever have been left alone in life. I know you think it presumption for me to talk to you of my devotion when I have no wealth, but you have heard of my history long since—how **all my** father’s property was swept away during the war; yet, Myrtle, I **have** great and boundless love; and, thank God, I have also a pure and honest name to offer you; and I hope also through sobriety and diligence to gain in the course of time a lucrative practice. I feel assured it will take years to become well established in my profession, yet in the meantime I **expect** to work

constantly. Myrtle, in the years of toil awaiting me, may I not have joy in the expectancy of one day, after I have made a success of life, of your becoming my beloved wife?

"Tell me my fate, Myrtle? Do not let me wait in horrible suspense, for I know you are good and noble and would not give me pain; although you look so lovely, yet did I not believe your heart to be as pure as your face is beautiful, I could not love you."

At these last words of Ulhugh's a quick flush spread over Myrtle's face, and there was also a look of pain in her countenance.

"Hush, hush, Ulhugh, say no more—I beseech you; no more of love, for I can never love any man. Forgive me if I have by word or deed encouraged you in the least degree, for if I did I was unconscious of so doing. Knowing I could never love, my heart is so frozen that it cannot be melted even by your pure, warm love. Ulhugh, if I have deceived you and made you think I am better than I really am, God forgive me for thus sinning against you. Oh, Ulhugh, if I did love you, I am not worthy of your pure and noble heart. I know whereof I speak, for I have been thrown in your company ever since we were children. You are only a few months older than I, Ulhugh, yet I seem to know far more of the world than you do—hence, I say it is best that you go and love another. Your brother on his dying bed requested me to be a sister to you. I can grant his petition, but once and forever, kind friend, I can never give you any hope of becoming your wife. Not that I now, or ever expect to, love another, for I think more of you than any gentleman of my acquaintance. Yet I feel it is best for you and best for me that I remain forever Idina Dean."

"Myrtle, may God bless you for saying you think

more of me than any of your gentleman friends. I have so taken you by surprise and startled you by my abrupt love making that I do not wonder at your indifferent answer. I will wait patiently for one month and then ask you again if there is any hope for me. Oh, Myrtle, Myrtle, God grant that you will love me, and I think you would, could you ever realize how sincerely I worship you."

Ulugh took Myrtle's little white hand that he saw resting on the side of her chair, but the beautiful girl drew it from him, and casting on him her great, lustrous dark eyes which spoke plainer than words: "Surely, Ulugh, you have forgotten yourself," and the beautiful "star-eyed" queen of the South arose and glided from Ulugh's presence.

CHAPTER XXXII.

“ I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano,
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.”

—*Shakespeare.*

DURING the month that Ulhugh awaited an answer from Myrtle he saw the lovely girl each day, yet not a word of love did he speak—only laughed and talked to her as any good friend would have done. But Ulhugh was a man that almost any girl would have loved if long thrown in his company, so it was no wonder it gradually dawned upon Myrtle that Ulhugh Waldo was more to her than she wished him to be. Dearer now than a brother, for her heart throbbed at the mention of his name and her dreamy eyes, though still sad, had a luster and warmth in them never known to their dark orbs before. Ah, it was the fire that love had kindled, and who could now stay its flames? It had come to conquer, or to utterly consume its victim.

Myrtle knew that love had taken possession of her heart, and in a sense it gave her more happiness than she thought it possible for her ever to realize. She had tried hard to avoid Cupid's arrows, but the little sprite had taken deadly aim, and the cold, queenly, beautiful Idma loved now, as only a girl of her character could love. Think not it was a passing fancy—an impression made on Idma's heart would last forever; and she who a few weeks ago was incased in ice was now enveloped in a sea of love that dashed and raged against her

throbbing heart, making her to ask herself: "Am I indeed Myrtle? she had no heart, but this Myrtle loves Ullugh as she loves her own soul.

"Ah, but why cherish my affection? I can never marry. If I have deceived the world, I will not be false to him I love. A husband has a right to know a wife's innermost soul. How could I look Ullugh in the face knowing I had deceived him? No, never, never, could I be so wicked!"

Hence the love that should have made Myrtle most happy, only made her more miserable. Myrtle thought things were dreadful enough as they stood, but Ullugh made them worse when he said with great sadness on telling her good-night: "Miss Myrtle, to-morrow is the day of all days to me—remember I am to receive my answer from you. Please be sure you know your own mind, for if you discard me, I will say good-by forever; goodnight, and may God help you to love me."

He was gone, and Myrtle was left alone.

"'May God help you to love me,' as if I cared nothing for him! Ah, that is the trouble now—I love him too much—why did he cross my path? Asleep or awake his image is ever before me. I love him, yes, I would go through flames and never feel the burn for the love I bear him. Love him? I could be torn in pieces by wild beasts and never feel the wounds if it were to free him from harm. Love him? yes, yes, I love him; my poor heart is crushed with the love I bear him, but Idma's love is too deep to deceive him whom she worships! Ullugh, you shall go free; I shall wear the fetters. My heart is greater than even your noble heart can conceive, for it is strong enough to sacrifice my love for your future happiness. Ullugh, I can never, never be your wife, yet a dagger at my heart I could receive rather than tell you 'nay,' for

oh how I love you," and the beautiful girl put her hands over her face and sobbed bitterly.

Cecil came under the arbor at this moment—alas, it was that same fated retreat in which they had stood years before, but Myrtle was so absorbed in grief that she did not see him. Cecil's heart went out to the poor girl, and he would have put his arms about her, as he had done many times when she was a child, but he knew she would not receive his affection as she had done then, so endeavoring to comfort her as best he could, he said: "Myrtle, my child, do you mind telling me what grieves you?"

Then he went on talking as if speaking to himself.

Myrtle hushed her sobs and dried her tears, for there was something in Cecil's sad voice that calmed her soul just as when he had taken her in his arms as a little girl and lulled her to sleep.

"Tell me, child, is your trouble one in which I can help you? I do not wish to pry into your life, and I know you will believe me when I say I only wish to comfort you. Myrtle, I had thought you happy. I knew you loved Ulhugh, for I have seen your affection grow from indifferent friendship into deepest love, and how it has delighted my soul, although I had hoped you would love Lenfred. Every one says he is dead in love with you; but if you love Ulhugh, it is well, for whoever your choice may be, Myrtle, I know it is a wise one, since you are a sensible girl and are better acquainted with the two young men than I—hence can best judge of their merits. My child, now that you can marry and be happy, why delay the wedding day? Ulhugh is poor, but I have wealth, and will gladly give him a start in life. When you wish to marry, I will give you a bridal present of fifty thousand dollars. So if it is your lover's poverty that makes you cry,

Myrtle, cease your tears; you shall never want for anything as long as I have a cent."

Not one word did Myrtle utter in reply to Cecil's remarks, for how could she tell the poor sick man what was in her sad heart? It would necessitate the bringing up of all the hateful past to his mind, and this she could not do—no, she would endure her grief alone. Many years she had borne burdens, she would continue to bear them until death should set her free. "Little one, will you not tell me?"

Myrtle was startled—many days had gone by since he used that term "little one" to her, but she knew she had nothing to fear from Cecil now, for never had he made the slightest reference to the past. "Will you not tell me when the wedding day shall be, when will my Myrtle be married?"

"Never, Cecil, never!"

"Never? why, Myrtle, do you deny your love for Ulhugh?"

"No, I love him more than my own life."

"Then, my child, why do you not marry him?"

"I have the best of reasons. Cecil, please do not question me further—it would do no good for me to tell you why I cannot marry Ulhugh."

Like an arrow the cause of Myrtle's grief shot through Cecil's mind. He remembered now that long ago she had said she would never marry; alas, he knew too well the reason of the sweet girl's misery. Cecil disliked to refer to the past, yet he was willing to do anything to bring happiness to Myrtle.

"My child, I know your reason for not marrying—you told me before you left for school, yet I had hoped, as the years rolled by, you had changed your mind. Are your feelings on this subject the same as they were then, Myrtle?"

"Yes, Cecil, but let it pass."

"Child, because I am sick, in the goodness of your heart you would spare me every pain, but I beseech you to keep nothing from me; it will relieve your mind to confide in me. Will you not tell me what you were crying about a few minutes ago?"

"Cecil, I do not wish to make you sad, but as you have insisted on knowing my sorrow, listen—a few weeks ago Ulhugh addressed me—I refused him. It was not hard for me to say 'no' then, for I did not love him, although I admired him more than any man I had ever met. He told me as his lovemaking had been rather sudden and abrupt, he would wait one month so that I might have due time for reflection ere I gave to him my final decision. He has not spoken one word of love since, but having seen him from day to day, the sisterly feeling I once had for him has grown into another that is far beyond a sister's affection. Ah, yes, into a love so fervent that I am frightened, not knowing what might be the grave consequences of such ardent devotion. A few minutes ago Ulhugh left me with these words: 'Miss Myrtle, if you reject me the second time, I will go where you can never again see me.' Cecil, I am crying because my second answer must be as my first—either this, or tell him what my life has been. I cannot, I will not deceive the man I marry. What must I do Cecil? Oh, if I only knew what course to pursue, for I love him until my soul seems consumed in love. Oh, it will be so hard for me to give him up forever!" and the poor girl wrung her hands with grief seeming to forget the presence of him who had been the cause of all her sorrow.

It is needless to say Cecil knew more anguish than Myrtle, for often those who are the cause of another's distress suffer themselves the more agony. Cecil

wiped his cold brow, and tried in every way to comfort Myrtle, yet his words were of little avail.

“Cecil, I shall tell Ulhugh all my life and let him decide for himself if it is best for me to marry him.”

“Myrtle, my child, what do I hear? You certainly do not expect to reveal your past history to your lover; he of all persons in the world should be kept in the dark; and why tell him anything about your former life. For do you know there are only a few couples who would dare divulge to each other the secrets that are forever locked in their bosoms? Myrtle, you are too conscientious. Be wise, my child; have you thought of the grave consequences of such grievous information, and then, Myrtle, Ulhugh would think you told him the truth only in part. Furthermore, your lover would kill me as he would a common dog. Not that I would mind his murdering me, my child; it would only be a release from the torment I have suffered since that fated night, for you can see I am dying from remorse of conscience, and have but a few days to live; so it is not for myself, but for you, Myrtle, and my poor wife I plead; for if I should be killed by Ulhugh the disgrace would be felt by all. The law would compel him to give a reason for my death, and he would have to state the plain facts in the case to save his own life. Oh, Myrtle, my child, think, think well, I beseech you, ere you bring such anguish upon yourself and family.”

Cecil had risen from his seat, and was walking excitedly to and fro in the little arbor—his face was as pale as death, and he appeared to be much weaker than usual. Myrtle perceived his anguish, and felt she had given him needless suffering. “Forgive me, Cecil, that I should have given you the least pain while you are yet sick; try to calm yourself; for I shall never do anything that can injure you or any whom you love. You

are coughing; it is now best that you go into the house. There, I hear Leita calling you now—I suspect she is worried about your being out in the night air.”

As Cecil walked away Myrtle thought—“Ah, surely, ‘the wages of sin is death.’ I know the end is nearly come to this poor man; he cannot possibly live but a few days longer. It appears doubly sad when it is remembered the beginning of his life was so bright and prosperous, and to think his sun must set in gloom. Although he has forever ended my happiness, God help me to forgive him as I hope to be forgiven. I wish **him** to die in peace. Ulhugh, I will see you to-morrow for the last time—I would tell you my sad history, but I would not endanger the life of Cecil. You shall, Ulhugh, soon forget me, go marry a sweet, trusting woman; you will yet become happy in her love; but poor, fated Idma shall sorrow and grieve and live in loneliness with none to comfort and cheer her, for he whom she loved and worshipped shall be lost to her forever.

“ One fatal remembrance, one sorrow that throws
Its bleak shade alike o’er our joys and our woes,
To which life nothing darker or brighter can bring,
For which joy has no balm and affliction no sting.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“ I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid.”

—*Shakespeare.*

ON Mr. Felix's return home he read Raymond's letter and then taking Edith's picture in his hands gazed intently into the sweet face. “ My God, what do I see? This is Viola Waldo's child as certain as I live. Too often have I visited Ulhugh in his early married life to have forgotten the lovely face of his child-bride, whose beauty was too peculiarly striking to be forgotten. I also remember they had a little girl, and because of her striking likeness to her mother Ulhugh wished the little one to be named Viola, but to this Mrs. Waldo objected, and later persuaded her husband to name the baby Edith for a loved schoolmate of hers. Ah, my fears are only too true—when is the wedding day?”

Mr. Felix looked at the invitation card, which he already knew by heart, and then sighed deeply. “ It will be impossible for me to arrive in Baltimore, even if the train is on time, until the exact hour of the wedding. What shall I do? Something must be done at once to prevent this horrible consummation. Ah, I will telegraph immediately to Raymond,” and Mr. Felix, not waiting to put on his hat, rushed through the streets like a madman, and going direct to the telegraph office sent this telegram :

“ In the name of all that is sacred do not marry. I come on the next train so as to prove the impossibility

of your union with the young lady. I beseech you stop everything until you see me.

“J. A. FELIX.”

The message like many other telegrams was delayed, and you have already witnessed the dreadful consequence of its non-arrival.

When Edith and Raymond became aware of their being brother and sister, news that at one time would have been so sweet to them, now made bitterness of agony beyond description. Edith when alone with Raymond threw herself in her brother's arms and sobbed bitterly. The bridal veil becoming wet in tears, she moaned: “Take it from me, unpin it, Raymond, I shall never need it more. Oh, Raymond, how I love you, and to think our deepest devotion will become our greatest curse! Oh, my Father, what can I do without my Raymond?” and the beautiful girl wept and refused to be comforted.

“Edith, my darling, I know it is hard for one so young, fair, and free from care to bear this heavy burden; would it were in my power to suffer for you, my darling; yet try to calm yourself. God will give you strength if you ask Him. Ah, if the late war sent as much anguish into every home North and South as our family has experienced, there surely would never more be clashing of arms, for men would learn to reason with each other rather than kill one another in cold blood, leaving their families to grieve and suffer for generations afterward. I do not censure my dear father, or any one individual, but strange it is that Christian nations do not learn a better way to settle their differences.

“Raymond, my brother, my lover, my husband, you can never be—tell me no more of war; my heart is

bursting because I must forever be separated from you. Will you indeed leave me, my Raymond? please say you will not, for I die the day I see your face no more."

"My darling, my poor little thing," and he stooped and kissed tenderly the childlike face, as he continued: "Precious, if we had known of our near kinship before the world knew of our love we might have lived together as devoted brother and sister, but, under the existing circumstances, it would look wrong in the eyes of the world should I continue longer to see your face. So, darling, I must leave this very night for California; the sooner we separate, my angel, the better it will be for both of us. And now, my angel, kiss me good-by. I had rather be torn in pieces than to part from my darling, or to see her suffer as she does to-night. Yet what has been decreed we should meet with Christian fortitude. Good-by, good-by, my darling—a last, long kiss, my beautiful bride. Perhaps we shall never meet again on earth, yet your sweet face is so indelibly impressed on my heart that I shall see it as the days come and go, and never can I forget, darling, how lovely you looked to-night. Remember further, my precious sister, it will not be long before we shall all be gathered in an unbroken family—to dwell with mother, father, and the many loved ones gone to the other shore, where 'there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage, but all are as the angels in heaven.'"

Edith made no answer, simply clung to Raymond as a frail tendril twines itself about something strong. Gently and tenderly the brother took from his neck his sister's snowy white arms. Edith made no resistance; poor girl, she was too weak, and now her strength seemed to be fast failing. Raymond imprinted one more fervent, loving kiss on his Edith's tear-stained cheeks, and then turning to leave he noticed a sweet,

calm smile upon her lovely face. "Thank God," he thought, "my darling is becoming reconciled. Oh, I can stand anything better than to see my Edith suffer. Mine—did I say? Ah, mine no more forever."

A few minutes later, Mrs. De Long went in Edith's room, and found her in the same state of mind in which Raymond had left her. Gently the foster-mother undressed her beautiful daughter, and thinking as Edith did not speak she preferred to be quiet, the good woman also remained silent; yet, thinking: "Poor child, I would not add to her grief, for I know her heart is bursting." Mrs. De Long then tucked Edith in bed as she had done so often in days gone by and kissed tenderly and gently the flushed, feverish cheeks of the lovely girl, and turned the gas low prior to leaving the room. But think not the good woman slept that night, for her anxiety concerning Edith was too great, and she fain would have visited the young girl's room had she not feared she would disturb the fair sleeper's rest. However, at the early dawn, the mother being overcome with anxiety for her daughter, tipped to Edith's door and knocked gently. Receiving no answer she walked lightly into her daughter's room.

What did she see? Edith lying on her snowy bed with her fleecy bridal veil wrapped about her perfect form, with the same sweet smile upon her face that her lover had noticed ere he had taken his final farewell of his betrothed, with this exception—there was now no color in the dimpled cheeks, and the mischievous dark-blue eyes had forever lost their sparkling luster. "God have pity," cried the broken-hearted mother, for Edith's golden hair had become as snow-white as her tiny hands that lay folded on her calm, peaceful breast. "Alas, alas, my beautiful Edith is dead! Yes, dead—dead!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CASS—"The ides of march are come."

SOOTH—"Ay Cæsar, but not gone."

—*Shakespeare.*

CECIL being very ill when the day arrived for Myrtle to give her final decision to her lover, the young girl wrote Ullugh to postpone his visit until her brother might become better. Cecil continued quite sick for weeks, yet Myrtle was ever faithful in nursing the man who had made her life so unhappy. In the meantime Lenfred had come and on meeting Ullugh there immediately sprang up a warm friendship between the two young men; and when Lenfred found that Ullugh was the son of the Waldo who had saved his life on the battlefield of Manassas, his heart went out with increased love for his new friend.

Lenfred, having already established himself on the pinnacle of his profession, was called in to attend Cecil in his illness. The young physician saw Myrtle now each day, and it is unnecessary to say his love for the beautiful girl increased hourly, especially as he observed the gentleness with which she nursed her sick brother, and how she tried in every way to relieve her sister of all burden and care attendant upon lingering sickness. In truth, Myrtle was a sweet, ministering angel, and Lenfred only waited Cecil's recovery to breathe forth his ardent love for the beautiful girl,

when an unlooked-for incident occurred that startled him greatly.

Strolling alone in the woods one day he became tired, and sitting down on an old log, as he rested, some business transaction came into his mind; putting his hands into his pocket to get a piece of paper so as to make certain calculations—he felt in this and that pocket, both large and small, yet no paper could he find—pity, pity, then turning his head his eyes rested on a clean white sheet on the ground. After finishing the ciphering, he was about to tear the paper and cast it from him, when he accidentally noticed his name written on the other side of the page.

“Well, this is strange; who is writing my name and throwing it about the woods? I must see what it means.” And by the fast-fading twilight Lenfred read:

“Oh, Myrtle, Myrtle, how I long to know that you love me. You said once you did not love me, but will there never be any hope for Ulhugh—he that has ever been your friend since boyhood? Do you not know the brightest days will be as midnight without the sunlight of your sweet face? How I do envy Lenfred’s seeing you from day to day. Oh, Myrtle, what if you should love him, and it would be but natural, for he is intelligent, refined, wealthy, handsome, polished, healthy, a true Christian gentleman; in short, the most rounded and perfected manhood is centered in him. Should he lay all he possesses at your feet, could you say him ‘nay?’ Yet, Myrtle, my darling, think, oh think, before you send me away in despair——”

Lenfred read this note and everything reeled before him. “He loves her, but she does not love him. I, too, love her—would she ever love me? I have the right to find out, as she has refused Ulhugh, which is quite evident from this note. She is free, thank God, and as I have loved her all these years and have been forced to

keep locked my heart's secret, it is but proper that I should immediately go and tell my fair queen all the love of my soul. If she loved Ulhugh, I would feel in honor bound to still subdue my affections, but as she cares nothing for him I feel free to press my suit, and as Cecil is much better to-day, I shall go at once and tell my treasure of my love for her."

Lenfred pondered these things, and reviewing his life, his mind unconsciously reverted to that night on the battlefield of Manassas when he had thought himself almost past life, and another soldier—Waldo by name—lay dying by his side; but ere this brave Southern soldier breathed his last he had snatched the cloth that served to stanch his life-blood from his own wounds and bound it about the boy in blue, at the same time giving the Northern lad the last drop of water in his canteen, and for all this kindness the brave soldier made a strange request:

"Lad, if in the weary years to come you can in any way add to the happiness of my baby boy, will you do so?"

"Oh, God, oh, God! it is his voice from the spirit-land. And I did swear, yes, my oath was trebly bound by the droppings—thud—thud—thud! of his life-blood; and now to think the young man who wrote this note is that dying soldier's 'baby boy.' What! Did the father peer through the years, even to this fated day? Was a vision granted the suffering soldier that he should have made of me this fated request? And I did swear, yes, it seemed then a little thing for me to grant; but alas, I know now—too late—it involves my eternal happiness. Must I in truth give up all hope of ever winning the queenly Idma, and see her given to another just when she seemed almost my own? Surely it is impossible for me to intercede for Ulhugh while I with bursting heart long to claim her my own fair bride! No, never—I can-

not—I will not. Hark, hush, does the dying soldier in ghostlike accents speak to me from the tomb? Oh, man, you had never survived the battlefield of Manassas had not the soldier in gray died that the lad in blue might live. Take heed, your young life-blood still pulsates with active vitality; you have wealth, position, while I am dead, my body dust, my name forgotten—let it pass. Yet my son, my ‘baby boy,’ my namesake, my Ulhugh, poor and unknown, for him I come from the spirit-land to intercede. He has nothing except the hope he has centered in the beautiful Idma Dean. Will you take from him his all, and blast his young life when it is on the eve of bursting into happiness? Your oath, young man, your oath.”

In imagination Lenfred saw the dying soldier appear before him with ghostly visage pleading for his baby boy. Arising from the old log, Lenfred gazed about him with a wild, vacant stare on his sad, dejected countenance, and had Ulhugh come to search for the note he had accidentally dropped, he would have mistaken Lenfred for a madman. No one, however, molested the soul-perplexed victim who for hours remained in that lonely spot alone with his grief—trying to decide in some way his future course toward Ulhugh and Myrtle. His heart telling him one thing, while his conscience bade him do another. Midnight passed, and still the struggle went on. “Must I ask myself the same question a thousand times, and come to the same conclusion? Is it possible for me to see another take my beautiful Idma, and lose her forever? No, it cannot be! it shall not be!” Lenfred’s forehead had become damp and cold; the heavy night dews fell thick about his uncovered head—still he seemed to feel nothing save the anguish that gnawed at his breast. At last sinking upon the ground, it dawned upon his soul

to go to the ever pitying Father for solace and comfort. Reverently kneeling in the stillness of that midnight hour Lenfred Lamont poured out his soul to his Maker as he had never before, and He who knoweth our weaknesses enfolded His fainting child to His fatherly bosom and bore him above the lashing waves of sorrow and despair, for when Lenfred arose from his knees he was as composed as if nothing had ever happened to thwart his happy life plans. Yet could you have scrutinized his calm face, you would have observed he had passed through the crucible, but had come forth the purer from the contact with the fiery flames of suffering.

“I know my duty only too well—Idma, angel of my life, I love thee more than my being, but alas! the love I bear thee shall be buried with me in the grave—my Maker be praised that He has given me fortitude to keep my oath to the dying soldier. Doubtless Myrtle did not marry Ulhugh because of his poverty, thinking perhaps his income was insufficient to support two persons. To remedy this, I shall at once give him an offer to become my medical partner, and then the beautiful Myrtle can have no possible excuse for rejecting Ulhugh, as he is a man whose character is not only above reproach, but is in every respect a grand and noble gentleman, chivalrous and brave, in truth, a fit husband. Yes, even for the queenly Idma Dean. I shall henceforth lose no time in endeavoring to assure Myrtle of Ulhugh’s great merits. My sacrifice is beyond that which I thought myself capable of making; yet I believe God will sustain me in my decision; for alas, I know now I could never be happy with the fair Idma Dean in that my oath would be as a ghost calling to remembrance that horrible night at Manassas. God grant as the years roll by my suffering may become blunted. I am exceedingly glad mother does not know

of my devotion to Myrtle, for while she suspects I greatly admire the beautiful girl, yet she is not positive of my love beyond that of true friendship and high esteem. And what a blessing I have never breathed my vows to Myrtle. She can now marry Ulhugh and live at our house, and mother will find in her a sweet companion, and I will still have a sisterly friend. Ah God help me to be true to my oath."

A few days later, to the amazement of all in the little village, Cecil became greatly improved in health, so much so that he persuaded Lenfred (better known to the outside world as Dr. Lamont) to grant him the privilege of a short walk. "Well, perhaps a little outing will do you good, Cecil, yet be sure not to overtax your strength, for if you do another hemorrhage will be the inevitable consequence. Let nothing exciting enter into your life—'forewarned is forearmed,' is what mother would say. Good-by, I will drop round and see you in a few days, and I hope by that time to find you much improved," and Lenfred, smiling pleasantly, tipped his hat and walked hurriedly out of Cecil's front gate. Ulhugh, on meeting Cecil a half hour later, was glad indeed to see him up, and doubly so when he remembered he could now see Myrtle. Hastening to the old mansion Ulhugh with beating heart rang the door bell. The servant who answered the summons was requested to ask Miss Myrtle if she would enjoy a stroll, as it was such a beautiful afternoon. Ten minutes had hardly passed when Myrtle appeared in the parlor. Her greeting to Ulhugh was in accents tremulous with sweet emotion. Ulhugh thought as she stood before him adorned in spotless white she had never looked more like an angel. "She is indeed too pure and lovely for earth."

As the two lovers walked through the sweet-scented

flower garden, Myrtle paused and took from her favorite rosebush some snowy buds, and pinned them on her breast.

"Miss Myrtle, I do not remember ever having seen you without flowers. Do you wear them all the time?"

"Most of the time, Ullugh, and I frequently fall asleep with my hands full of blossoms. I admire all flowers, but especially am I fond of white roses and lilies of the valley."

Myrtle had put on a broad-brimmed hat so that her dark eyes were not seen by Ullugh's earnest gaze; yet it was best he did not read the meaning of those fathomless orbs. The lovers talked but little—for both were absorbed in sad reflection—and came after a short walk to a place that was beautiful beyond comparison. The vines had overlapped and interlaced and twined themselves into caressing tendrils about old oaks as if to exclude the kissing sunshine from the mossy roots—gorgeous flowers, bright-plumed songsters, the faint twittering of the humming birds, the low buzz of the bumble-bee, the rhythmical dip of the dripping oars in the blue lake beyond, the tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, of the far-away cow bell, the sweet, musical laughter of children playing on the sandy lake shore, the baa-baa of lazy sheep, and the low cooing of the turtle dove—all tended to enhance the charm of "Lovers' Lane," as this tunnel of loveliness was fitly called. Surely death itself would be sweet when the senses were lulled to rest by faint incenses of perfumed flowers, and weary eyelids, touched by the airy wings of golden butterflies, closed in sweet forgetfulness to wake in fairer celestial climes. Lenfred was entering "Lovers' Lane" when he observed the lovers approach, but he hastily made his retreat, while Myrtle tarried to gather the wild flowers that grew in her pathway.

“God forbid that I should cloud their sunny lives with my saddened being; if it is impossible for me to be joyous, I will not debar others of pleasure. Oh, beautiful woman, be happy, for it is not necessary that one should tell me you too have suffered in life from some hidden grief, and if the loveliest creature in all the world has sorrow, shall I go free? Yet, I had hoped to gladden your sad face, but ‘never more,’ ‘never more,’ is the cheerless knell that echoes in the silent halls of my darkened soul. Ah, Poe, I comprehend alas, too late. the croaking of thy ill-omened Raven, wailing forth ‘never more’—‘never more!’”

Myrtle nervously twining the wild flowers into a beautiful wreath threw it carelessly about her exquisitely formed neck and shoulders, and entered “Lovers’ Lane.” Her heart beat fast and loud, for she knew this tunnel of loveliness would be to her a martyr’s ground; yet her mind was firmly fixed. She had prayed for courage, and knew in whom she trusted. “I will in a few short moments bid adieu forever to the man I hold dearer than my life, but better an eternal farewell to him I love than endanger the life of Cecil, or to deceive Ulhugh in reference to my true character.”

The young couple sat underneath an old moss-covered tree, with daisies and violets blossoming beneath their feet; all nature seemed hushed to catch their whispers of love. Ulhugh had wished his wooing to be in accents as sweet as ancient knights to their ladies fair; but poor man, his only thought now was that Myrtle would surely hear the loud throbbing of his beating heart, and alas that which he intended to say passed forever from his mind. He saw, moreover, Myrtle’s nervousness and felt keenly the awkwardness of the occasion; neither spoke. The perplexity of each became doubly embarrassing.

At last, with a mighty effort, Ulhugh managed to stammer: "Myrtle, you know me too well to expect anything but bluntness from my tongue. I am not gifted in wooing, my darling, but you know only too well I love you. I now ask you to-day, once more, and also for the last time, if there is any hope of your becoming my bride? I have more to offer you to-day than I had one month ago, for Dr. Lamont wishes me to be his medical partner, as his practice has become entirely too large for one man to attend to properly. He tells me that he has had his eyes open for some time trying to find a suitable partner. I certainly feel grateful and flattered that he has selected me from among his numerous acquaintances; and oh, Myrtle, my darling, how happy I was when I knew I would soon have a remunerative practice, for I felt because of my poverty you had refused my heart. But now with bright prospects to lay at your feet have you any encouragement to give me—will you be my wife, Myrtle?"

No answer came to Ulhugh's question, but instead an awful death-like stillness ensued, and Myrtle turned her head from her lover's earnest gaze, that he might not see the agony depicted in her countenance. Yet Ulhugh continued to plead—his manly voice made tremulous now with the burning love of his soul: "Oh Myrtle, my angel, through many weary years have I waited that I might finally win you, and if you will promise to be mine forever, you know I will strive to my utmost to make you happy. I doubt not you believe the sincerity of my words. When last I spoke to you, Myrtle, of my devotion, you said you admired me above any of your gentleman friends—has your esteem grown to more than a sisterly regard—speak to me, purest, loveliest being—tell me my fate—will you be mine?"

"Never, never, Ulhugh," and Myrtle wrung her hands, her grief being beyond her control; even her lover observed her sad, tearful countenance. "Leave me, Ulhugh, I can never marry you."

"Myrtle, my darling, I will not leave you," and Ulhugh clasping tenderly her little cold white hands tried to kiss them into warmth once more. "No, Myrtle, I will not leave you until I hear from your own lips you care nothing for me. I pray you, my angel, tell me truly do you not love me?"

With beating heart Ulhugh waited Myrtle's reply, which never came. "Ah, Myrtle, you are too true to deceive me, darling—those sad, beautiful eyes that have haunted and charmed me all through my almost fated life tell me that which you are too modest to whisper. Yes, my angel, your soulful orbs have betrayed your heart's secret. Love is written in their mysterious depths; my Myrtle, yet fain would you try to conceal it by those long, drooping lids—ah, my darling, are you ashamed of love—the purest, sweetest bliss given to mortal man?"

"Oh, Ulhugh, I am distracted, leave me alone with my grief, I pray you; persecute me no longer."

"My darling, you are doing the persecuting—you do not deny your love, and if you have the slightest affection for me, why can I not hope some day to win you? Is it, Myrtle, because you think your station in life is above mine?"

"No, no, Ulhugh, I thought you knew me better than to think thus of me," and with a melancholy expression in her lustrous dark eyes Idma looked into the wistful face of her lover, and whispered sadly:

"Ah, Ulhugh, it would be the happiest day of my being could I become your wife, but I cannot; I dare not!"

“Myrtle, my darling, are you betrothed? Surely I am becoming crazed; have mercy, fair woman, and give me some clew to all this mystery. Are you engaged to another?”

“No indeed, Ulhugh, no man ever spoke one word of love to me—I—never—I—no—unmar—I——”

“Oh, Myrtle, my darling, confide in me; why do you not marry me? Forgive my seeming rudeness in asking you such a question; but I will hazard frowns if in the end I might win your affection. Speak, Myrtle, ideal of all that is lovely and pure, is there any hope for a poor, unknown Southern boy, with no inheritance save the pure and spotless name bequeathed by a grand and noble father, who poured out his life-blood to save our fair Southland; yes, and if a hundred lives he could have had, all and more would have been gladly given in his country’s service. And now, Myrtle, will you scorn the brave soldier’s son, because as yet he has not made a name for himself? Ah, Myrtle, it must be true, else why do you persist in refusing my offers of love?”

The silence that then ensued was equalled only by the stillness of death. Myrtle did not dare speak for fear she might unlock the hidden secret of her soul—seconds passed into minutes, and eternity alone will tell the anguish pent in the heart of those two Southern children.

“Myrtle, I fall at thy feet; all homage will I give to thee, beautiful queen of my heart, but as I kneel before thy supreme loveliness it has suddenly and horribly dawned upon me that you love another. Surely, Myrtle, you must love Lenfred—why did I not see it before? Oh, God, how can I give you to another? Yes, you are too good to wound my feelings by telling me you love Lenfred. Myrtle, my darling, farewell, let me clasp once more those little white hands and kiss them

for the last time—my darling, I go to lands far distant to make for myself a name; you shall never see my face again, Myrtle; but remember, my angel, your pure life has been a sweet and holy benediction to my soul. One more fervent kiss,” and Ulhugh turned suddenly to go, so as to hide his deep emotion from the sad-hearted Idma.

“Stay, stay Ulhugh, I beseech you; I implore you,” and Myrtle wrung her hands and moaned. “Oh, Ulhugh, could you see my sorrowing heart you would not sharpen my grief by telling me you were going to leave me forever; have mercy, Ulhugh, say you will not go,” and Myrtle clung closer to her lover, as she saw him about to forsake her. With gentleness Ulhugh put her aside.

Before Ulhugh had gone five feet he thought he heard a husky voice. “Stop, young man, stop—” Myrtle startled, turning, saw, to her amazement, Cecil before them.

“Young man, please listen to me. I came here to rest, but unavoidably have heard your conversation, and now I hope you will pardon my seeming intrusion, and bear with me awhile. Yes, listen; this queenly girl could have married any man in this fair Southland or Northland either if she had so chosen, but she preferred you to all other men. She knew you had neither wealth nor name, but loved you for that which every woman should love a man—individual merit. Would you know why she would not consent to marry you?”

“Oh, Cecil, hush, please do not tell him,” and Myrtle putting her arms about her brother’s neck pleaded in vain for him to keep silent. She well knew when “Greek met Greek” she might expect a fearful “tug of war.” Cecil gently put his beautiful sister from him: “My child, the time has come for me to speak;

do not try to silence me—I will take the consequences of this hour.” With anguish in her sweet voice, Myrtle in pleading accents whispered: “Cecil, do not tell him; he will kill you.”

The sick man only smiled. “Myrtle, my child, I hold not my life dear unto myself, my purpose is fixed, I expect to tell Ulhugh all.”

The beautiful girl, with sorrow depicted on her countenance, stood by her brother’s side, trembling like an aspen leaf—her face was as white as her snowy dress, for she felt a fearful tragedy was about to ensue, as two brave Southern knights were now face to face. She well knew neither Cecil nor Ulhugh would brook an insult unavenged.

“Oh,” thought Myrtle, “what can I do to avert this storm that is about to burst upon our fated heads?”

“Young man, have patience, and be not amazed if your blood freezes or boils before I finish my story. This lovely girl has a mother, which, on a casual glance, is beautiful; yet did you study her face you would find the warmth of soul never came to soften her haughty expression. And although she is a woman of great brilliancy and culture, she is a confirmed infidel; consequently we do not expect to find much good in her; neither is it strange, under the circumstances, she should worship some of her children, and hate others. Myrtle happened to be one of the number she despised.”

“Cecil, please do not speak of my mother with so much disrespect. I am wounded to think——”

“My child, hush, for you know I speak only truth. As I intended saying, young man, Myrtle was neglected as if she had been a little waif. I lived in the same house with the child, and my heart went out in sympathy toward her because of her helplessness. The little one finding in me a comforter brought her many

sorrows to me that I might soothe and console her. She often sobbed herself to sleep in my arms, and many times have I kissed the tears away from her pinched cheeks, as I laid her tenderly to rest on her little bed. As the days went by the child grew from a frail bud into a beautiful flower; at the same time she became a part of my being and I loved her. Yes, oh God—must I say it? Loved her more than ever a man loved a sister. Start not, though it turns your heart to stone to hear all I have to say. To increase the horror of the situation, I was a married man, and knew well I should not love my beautiful niece, for such she is, although she had been taught to call me brother from her childhood. No one will ever know how hard I tried to subdue my affections, but all efforts to control my love was in vain; and one night in a mad hour (for God knows I had never premeditated sinning), a demon seemed to have suddenly taken possession of my being, but she fled from my presence in the greatest alarm. She had not left me five minutes until I became clothed in my right mind, and I immediately began to search for her so that I might entreat her forgiveness. On looking everywhere in the yard and not finding her, I at last went to her room—she was gone. I found on the table a note, the substance of which was—‘that rather than sin, or have me sin, she would die and meet her God.’ I rushed to the lake, believing she intended drowning herself. On seeing me, she swooned from fear. Ere she fell to the ground I had caught her in my arms, and while in an unconscious state I carried her to the house and laid her on her bed. She knew nothing for hours; when at last she awoke, she was of all beings most miserable, and she continued the most unhappy creature I ever saw. As the years rolled by I longed for the time for her to marry, hoping she would

then forget her unhappiness, but to my amazement, she said she would wed no man and thus act a deceiver. I reasoned with her, but her mind was as fixed as the law of the "Medes and Persians," and she persisted: 'I will never marry any man with a part of my life hid from his knowledge. If I am ever to become a wife, my husband will have to know long before the wedding day all that has taken place in my life. But as circumstances are such as to necessitate the concealment of my early years, I will remain unmarried to the end of my days;' and now, young man," there was observed at this moment a sudden tremor in Cecil's weak voice, "she who is too conscientious for her own happiness, she, the embodiment of truth and honor, stands before you to-day in womanly beauty—too pure for this sinful world. Ah, I have known her from babyhood, and you—" but the effort of talking was too much for Cecil, and he suddenly sank heavily to the ground. Myrtle rushed to her brother's side, and there was anguish in her voice.

"Oh, Cecil, what can I do for you? Look, Ulhugh; excitement has brought on another horrible hemorrhage. Oh, luckless day! what shall I do?"

Quicker than thought Myrtle threw herself on the ground and tenderly lifted Cecil's head, that was now covered with dust and saturated in blood, into her lap, then moaned piteously—"Oh, Ulhugh, this is the man who buried your dead brother, and paid all your expenses at college—poor man, he had a good heart, and although he sinned once, he like David repented in sackcloth and ashes; for he has been a changed man ever since that dreadful night. But this is no slight hemorrhage, go call his wife at once, and tell Dr. Lament not to delay a moment in coming to my brother's relief."

52

Ulhugh stood for a moment as one dazed, then in speechless silence turned away to carry out Myrtle's command, leaving Idma alone with Cecil. Myrtle's tiny embroidered handkerchief and her spotless white dress was soon soaked in blood. Cecil endeavored to move his head upon the ground, so as not to further soil his sister's dress, but Myrtle—sweet ministering angel—anticipated his intentions.

"Rest easy, Cecil, what is my dress in comparison to the ebbing of your life-blood?"

There being no abatement to the sick man's hemorrhage, and Myrtle seeing her small handkerchief was insufficient to keep Cecil's fast-flowing blood from her lap, with quick intuition undid her soft silken hair, so as to absorb the dark fluid in its meshes—anything to give her brother a resting place for his head. The dying man saw her deed of love, and groaned piteously.

"Oh, Cecil, it is nothing—I only wish I knew of something to make you more comfortable." Cecil Clair then closed his eyes, and Myrtle saw that death had already stamped its cold dews on his haggard face—in a few short moments he would be gone forever.

"Must he leave this world and enter the unknown eternity without one word of sympathy or love? It is impossible for his wife to see him again in life, as she is nowhere in sight."

With Christian charity—that is ever kind—the beautiful girl stooped and kissed the bloodstained lips of Cecil Clair. The dying man spoke not, but on opening his eyes Myrtle read in their sunken depths the gratitude of his soul.

"Make your peace with God, Cecil," whispered Myrtle, and then it was she remembered having promised her brother, when she was but a little girl, at the old lime sink, that should he die before she did she

would sing to him in his last moments. The thought of singing at this sad hour brought a sudden pang to her heart, but she was a woman that never broke a promise. So with determined will power and calmness that was surprising even to herself, her sweet voice was raised in plaintive lutelike strains:

“Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee,
Ev’n though it be a cross,
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee.”

Ere the sweet, angelic tones of the lovely singer had floated away to the deep blue lake, Cecil Clair opened his sunken eyes, and in broken, feeble, dying accents, whispered: “Wages—of—sin—is—de—ath!”

“Oh, Cecil, surely you have asked forgiveness at the hand of God? Remember he has said, ‘Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.’ Listen, dear brother, I will sing to you again:

“When ends life’s transient dream,
When death’s cold sullen stream,
Shall o’er me roll,
Blest Saviour, then in love,
Fear and distress remove;
Oh, bear me safe above,
A ransomed soul.”

As Myrtle sang a peaceful calm seemed to steal over the dying man’s haggard face. Myrtle bent low to hear his last whisper: “Lei—ta!” all was over! Cecil Clair was no more—his soul had gone to meet his God!

When Myrtle gazed upon the lifeless form before her—the man whom she had loved and worshipped in childhood, hated and feared in girlhood, pitied and soothed in womanhood—her own sad life came before her, so as to completely overwhelm her.

“Oh, God, is this indeed the once noble, handsome, dashing Cecil Clair, who saved my life one day from the watery grave, and in after years tried to—ah, but let it pass; let the dead rest in peace; the living must forgive if they hope to be forgiven. Strange, this man’s life should have been so interwoven with mine, and now the sin that has caused his death will drag me down also? Is it possible for any man to sin unto himself? Do not even the innocent and pure have to suffer because of the errors of the wicked? Will not the flames burn all alike that come nigh unto it? Will not every touch of sin blight the soul? My brother’s tragic death—was it because he crossed my path—was it my ill-omened self that dragged him down—and is not to-day the fated ‘Ides of March?’ Oh, my God, what dreadful doom awaits me? Ah, this fearful pain at my heart—Cecil, I feel that I too shall follow thee soon. Oh, dear Jesus in pity ‘abide with me. Oh, God, give me strength to sing my favorite hymn.”

Then a holy, triumphant light beamed in the face of the beautiful girl, as she trilled in “notes almost divine”—

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.”

Suddenly the rapturous tones died to wake no more on earth—the celestial strains caught by seraphs of God had been borne to His thorne on high to mingle with

the ceaseless halleluias of the redeemed as they shout eternal hosannas to the Lamb for sinners slain. The sad, lustrous, soulful eyes of the saintly girl cast forgiveness upon him who had blighted her life. Her long dark silken hair, crimsoned with blood, shaded Cecil's haggard face; and faintly murmuring: "Ul—hugh," Idma's queenly head slowly drooped and fell upon Cecil Clair's lifeless form. Yes, Idma—the child of the fated Ides was dead.

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A few moments had passed and Ulhugh returned with Lenfred. When the lover saw Myrtle's pulseless form, he moaned and cried out in his anguish: "My Maker, my God—Oh, she is dead—dead—oh, Myrtle, Myrtle, my darling, angel of my life—how I loved you! Oh, fated day that I was born only to see all whom I love pass forever from my sight. Did any words of mine bring about this sad tragedy? Oh, Idma, queen of my heart—speak to me once more—bring comfort to my poor, broken heart." The sorrowing man then caught Myrtle's lifeless body in his arms, and pressing it to his throbbing breast, seemed for the time to lose his reason: "Oh, my darling, you cannot die—you shall not be dead, dead, no, no!"

Lenfred at this moment gently touched the stricken man and his voice grew very tender: "Ulhugh, try to be calm, I also loved her—yes, even as much as you, but she was too pure to dwell upon this sinful earth. Think of her lovely life—beautiful and sweet in every way, and thank God, it was your good pleasure to have been thrown in her presence even for a few days. Ulhugh, try to bear your grief—listen, henceforth we shall be brothers, and in the weary years to come the "Blue" and the "Gray" shall together share each other's sorrows——"

“And Idma!” shouted Ullugh excitedly, in a voice almost prophetic:

“Idma—the embodiment of all that is pure and holy—shall be our beacon star, guiding us to blissful realms of eternal love.”

THE END.

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